**Indigenous Peoples Film Festival 2017**

2017 is Canada’s Sesquicentennial or 150th anniversary. Many celebrations and events are planned across the country but for many people, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, Canada exists on stolen land as this was not an empty space waiting to be populated. Through the Indigenous Study Group, CFUW is inviting Clubs, interest groups and individuals to learn more about our First Nations, Métis and Inuit heritage in this the 150th year since Confederation. Listed below are films and links that can be accessed free of charge to be shown at Club events or viewed by individuals. In selecting the films, we try to represent our three Indigenous Peoples: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. The films have also been chosen to reflect the experience in different areas of the country.

We have also included Study Guides which we hope will facilitate discussion. There is information on **The Talking Circle** which can be used with all films and **SG** after a tile indicates a separate Study Guide.

This is not designed to be a definitive list, so any comments or suggestions, or anything that you think others would enjoy watching, please feel free to share.

We are also hosting a Webinar later this year - details to follow.

This is an opportunity to educate ourselves and to grow in a respectful relationship with our Indigenous Peoples.

1. *Niigaanibatowaad: FrontRunners -* At a special ceremony during the opening of the 1999 Pan Am Games in Winnipeg, Manitoba, seven First Nations men in their fifties entered the stadium in war canoes. One of them held the Games torch. In 1967 when Winnipeg first hosted the Pan American Games, ten outstanding athletic teenage boys were chosen to run 800 kilometers over an ancient message route with the Games Torch. When the runners arrived at the stadium, they were not allowed to enter with the torch. Instead, a non-Aboriginal runner was given the honour. Thirty-two-years later, the province of Manitoba issued an official apology.

Nine of the ten young men chosen for the 1967 Pan Am Games torch run were from residential schools. Niigaanibatowaad is about the segregation of the Aboriginal athletes and the despair and abuse suffered in the school system. Niigaanibatowaad: FrontRunners is a story of survival, hope, reconciliation and a dream for a new beginning that transcends hatred and racism.

Watch ***NIIGAANIBATOWAAD: FRONTRUNNERS*** HERE: <https://www.nfb.ca/film/niigaanibatowaad_frontrunners/?utm_campaign=dc201705&utm_medium=email&utm_source=contacts&utm_content=frontrunners>



*No Turning Back* – [Gregory Coyes](https://www.nfb.ca/directors/gregory-coyes662599/" \o "More films by Gregory Coyes" \t "_parent) (47 minutes)

The Oka crisis brought Native rights into sharp focus. After the barricades came down, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples was created. It travelled to more than 100 communities and heard from more than 1,000 representatives. For two-and-a-half years, teams of Native filmmakers followed the Commission on its journey.

Watch ***NO TURNING BACK*** here:

<https://www.nfb.ca/film/no_turning_back/?utm_campaign=dc201702-cfuw&utm_medium=email&utm_source=contacts&utm_content=noturningback>

[***We Can’t Make the Same Mistake Twice***](https://www.nfb.ca/film/we_can_t_make_the_same_mistake_twice/?utm_campaign=ot-same-mistake-twice&utm_medium=email&utm_source=contacts&utm_content=dc-filmpage)  by [Alanis Obomsawin](https://www.nfb.ca/directors/alanis-obomsawin/) (2h 40 min) **SG**

In this documentary, distinguished filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin focuses her lens on the landmark discrimination case filed by the Assembly of First Nations and the Child and Family Caring Society of Canada against Indian Affairs and Northern Development Canada in 2007. Obomsawin exposes injustices to the community by showing how the child and welfare services provided to them are vastly inferior to the services available to other Canadian children, while giving voice to the childcare workers at the heart of the battle.

This film is only available at this time for community screenings. If you would like to organize a community screening you can contact Donna Cowan at [d.cowan@nfb.ca](mailto:d.cowan@nfb.ca)



1. *Highway of Tear*s is a documentary about the murdered or missing women along a 724 kilometer stretch of highway in northern British Columbia. **SG**

In Canada, more than 600 Aboriginal women have been reported missisng or murdered since the 1960s. The film explores the effects of generational poverty, residential schools, systemic violence and high unemployment rates on First Nations reserves and how this links with the murdered and missing women. It also explores what First Nations leaders are doing to try to reverse these negative influences.

Copies of the film has been purchased by National Office and may be borrowed for Club or individual use. Contact Robin Jackson, Executive Director at cfuwed@rogers.com

1. *Foster Child* – Métis 1987 (43 min) **SG**

In this documentary, filmmaker Gil Cardinal searches for his biological family to try and understand how he ended up in foster care as an infant. In his search, Cardinal encounters frustration and loss, but eventually finds answers and a new appreciation of his Métis culture.

This film is particularly relevant in view of the recent decision by an Ontario judge in a class-action lawsuit brought by Ontario [survivors of the ’60s Scoop](https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2016/08/22/sixties-scoop-survivors-day-in-court-finally-arrives-tuesday.html). The **Sixties Scoop** refers to the practice of taking ("scooping up") children of Aboriginal peoples in Canada from their families for placing in foster homes or adoption beginning in the 1960s and continuing until the late 1980s. The judge concluded that the government had a “common law duty of care” to take reasonable steps to prevent on-reserve children from losing their indigenous identity after they were removed and placed in non-indigenous care.

Watch ***FOSTER CHILD*** here: <https://www.nfb.ca/film/foster_child/?utm_campaign=dc201705&utm_medium=email&utm_source=contacts&utm_content=fosterchild>

*Richard Cardinal: Cry from a Diary of a Metis Child* - [Alanis Obomsawin](https://www.nfb.ca/directors/alanis-obomsawin/) (29 minutes) **SG**

This short documentary is a moving tribute to Richard Cardinal, a Métis adolescent who committed suicide in 1984. Taken from his home at the age of 4 due to family problems, he spent the rest of his 17 short years moving in and out of 28 foster homes, group homes and shelters in Alberta. A sensitive, articulate young man, Richard Cardinal left behind a diary upon which this film is based.

Watch ***Richard Cardinal: Cry from a Diary of a Metis Child*** here:

<https://www.nfb.ca/film/richard_cardinal/?utm_campaign=dc201705&utm_medium=email&utm_source=contacts&utm_content=richardcardinal>



1. *Totem: The Return of the G'psgolox Pole* 2003 - 1 h 10 min

This feature-length documentary traces the journey of the Haisla people to reclaim the G'psgolox totem pole that went missing from their British Columbia village in 1929. The fate of the 19th century traditional mortuary pole remained unknown for over 60 years until it was discovered in a Stockholm museum where it is considered state property by the Swedish government. Director Gil Cardinal combines interviews, striking imagery and rare footage of master carvers to raise questions about ownership and the meaning of Aboriginal objects held in museums.

Watch ***TOTEM: THE RETURN OF THE G’PSGOLOX POLE*** here: <https://www.nfb.ca/film/totem_the_return_of_the_gpsgolox_pole/?utm_campaign=dc-wideawake&utm_medium=email&utm_source=contacts&utm_content=totem-gpsgolox-pole>



1. *Inuuvunga - I Am Inuk, I Am Alive* 2004 – 57 min.

In this feature-length documentary, 8 Inuit teens with cameras offer a vibrant and contemporary view of life in Canada’s North. They also use their newly acquired film skills to confront a broad range of issues, from the widening communication gap between youth and their elders to the loss of their peers to suicide. In Inuktitut with English subtitles.

Watch I AM INUK, I AM ALIVE here: <https://www.nfb.ca/film/inuuvunga_i_am_inuk_i_am_alive/?utm_campaign=dc201705&utm_medium=email&utm_source=contacts&utm_content=iaminuk>



**Additional resources:**

<http://www.imaginenative.org/year-round>

imagineNATIVE is active year-round with numerous presentation, educational, and professional development activities. These include the annual imagineNATIVE Film + Video Tour, the indigiFLIX Community Screening Series, and co-presentation screenings and workshops with partners across Canada and around the world.

http://www.firstnationsfilms.com/

An excellent resource and website but movies are for purchase.

The **National Film Board of Canada** has the largest current production slate and collection of documentary work by indigenous directors in Canada.

Throughout 2017 the NFB is offering new and classic titles that reflect indigenous perspectives on our country in an initiative called Aabiziingwashi (Wide Awake): Indigenous Cinema on Tour.

This collection is important because it provides an unprecedented look at Canada through Indigenous eyes over the span of 50 years. Many of these films challenge the colonial practices, assimilationist policies and perspectives that have shaped our history books our educational systems, our legislation and the relationships between Indigenous and non-indigenous Canadians. These films provide new perspective and invite audiences to rethink their ideas about Canadian society, Canadian history and Indigenous peoples.

Through community partnerships the NFB is bringing a curated selection of these films to audiences across the country to facilitate dialogue, understanding and connection between indigenous and non-indigenous Canadians.

**To find out more visit** [**www.nfb.ca/wideawake**](http://www.nfb.ca/wideawake)

AND FINALLY – check the list of resources on the National Website: Reading Lists, Movies, Links to Government reports, etc.

[www.admin.org](http://www.admin.org)

Login: viewonly

PW: cfuw4321

Advocacy and Resolutions - Tools and Resources – Indigenous Peoples Study and Resources

**Indigenous Peoples Film Festival 2017: *Study Notes***

Submitted by:

Kathy Wosnick

CFUW Education Committee

May 2017

**For all Films:**

**The Talking Circle**

The “Talking Circle” can be used as a way to encourage dialogue and exploration of the

concepts and issues brought up in the videos. It ensures that everyone has the opportunity to engage in meaningful discussion. The task of facilitators showing the film in a group is to provide *a safe place* for people to respectfully name and listen to responses.

*Have sacred medicines available for an Aboriginal or mixed Aboriginal/non-*

*Aboriginal group if participants express a need for them*. For Aboriginal facilitators

or participating Elders: Whenever you smudge or use a sacred medicine, please

provide an explanation or teaching of what you are doing. For a smudge you can

tell everyone that sweetgrass or sage—whatever you are using—is a sacred

medicine used to cleanse our minds, hearts, and spirit, and that reflective

jewellery or glasses must be removed because they can reflect the good spirit

away from you. Explain that you use the smoke as if it were soap and water. Scrub

your hands and splash your face so your mouth will speak good things. Splash

your ears so you will hear good things, and splash your head so your mind will be

clean and open. Splash your heart so you will be respectful. You can explain that

people are not required to take part in the smudge but can pass by if they wish.

*Explain the use of the circle and feather (or rock) for speaking.* We refer to the

feather as a “talking feather” and it is used as a sign of respect. The feather comes

from the Eagle who acts as a messenger from the Great Spirit. Therefore when you

are holding a feather you have the ability to be a messenger. Only the person

holding the feather is to talk, thus people are not talking on top of each other.

Everyone’s opinion is valuable, no matter what the person is saying, and we must

listen with respect. Anyone who does not want to speak is respected and the feather or stone passed to the next participant. (A Talking stick may be substituted.)

*A multitude of emotions expressed by participants may require additional*

*support.* Have this support available on site (in the circle) and/or provide contact information to participants.

To guide the discussion, ask the following questions, passing the feather or stone around the circle after each question. Invite each individual participant to speak (of course deciding to pass without responding should be accepted without comment from the facilitator):

1. What feelings did you experience while watching the video?
2. What thoughts and ideas came to mind?
3. What questions arose for you while watching the film?
4. Compare/contrast your own personal experiences with those within the film or telling the story through the film.
5. How has your own perception of the treatment of Indigenous people in the history of our country changed?
6. What next steps could/should we take based on what we've seen today?
   * + - 1. As individuals?
         2. As a club?

*Bring the circle to an end by thanking everyone for participating. Make sure those who may need follow-up support have that either in person, or through contact name and phone number provided by the facilitator.*

Based on NFB Film Study Guides

*2.* ***We Can't Make the Same Mistake Twice*** Directed by Alanis Obomsawin; (163 minutes)

*Brief summary*: The new film from celebrated documentarian Alanis Obomsawin (Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance) chronicles the events following the filing of a human-rights complaint by a group of activists, which charged that the federal government's woefully inadequate funding of services for Indigenous children constituted a discriminatory practice.

Toronto International Film Festival 2016: In 2007, the Child and Family Caring Society of Canada and the Assembly of First Nations filed a landmark discrimination complaint against Indian Affairs and Northern Development Canada. They contended that child and family welfare services provided to First Nations children on reserves and in Yukon were underfunded and inferior to services offered to other Canadian children. The veteran director Alanis Obomsawin's We Can't Make the Same Mistake Twice documents this epic court challenge, giving voice to the tenacious child-care workers at its epicenter.

*Detailed Summary:* For more than four decades, Alanis Obomsawin has chronicled the discriminatory treatment and neglect of First Nations people by the Canadian government, creating some of the most vital and powerful documentaries of our time. Even within this stellar body of work, her latest stands out. *We Can't Make the Same Mistake Twice* documents the events following the filing of a human rights complaint by a group of activists — including the Assembly of First Nations and the Caring Society, led by the heroic and indefatigable Cindy Blackstock — which charged that the federal government's woefully inadequate funding of services for Indigenous children constituted a discriminatory practice.

As the case wends its way through the legal system, it becomes increasingly clear that this underfunding is a de facto continuation of the notorious residential school system, forcing First Nations to leave their families and reserves in order to access adequate health care, among other things. In one of the most appalling revelations, Obomsawin shows that the bureaucrats responsible for instituting Jordan's Principle — a program designed to help Indigenous kids in dire medical need by removing jurisdictional barriers to government support for long-term care — were either instructed or felt it was their duty to ensure that not a single dime of the program's $11 million in funding would be spent on the children who were supposed to benefit from it. Despite legal setbacks, unconscionable delays, and abhorrent political grandstanding from the government, Blackstock and her fellow activists refuse to give up the fight.

As the legal wrangling drags on, Obomsawin reminds us that children were suffering

unnecessarily while the government argued over matters of jurisdiction and took refuge in technicalities. Imbued with Obomsawin's unfailing moral clarity and sense of urgency, *We Can't Make the Same Mistake Twice* is not only a milestone in political documentary but an epic chronicle of a battle against injustice.

Sourced from the NFB

3. ***Highway of Tears*** Written and directed by Matthew Smiley (79 minutes)

The Highway of Tears refers to a section of Highway 16 in British Columbia where 18 official and at least 40 unconfirmed women have gone missing or been found murdered. The majority of them have been indigenous women, and the area itself reflects a dark history of abuses and systematic racism. It is 724 km stretch of road with countless gravel roads in different states of disrepair shooting off of it like small tributaries. Without a car this area is treacherous, and few of the towns along the huge stretch of country have doctors, schools or opportunities for employment. There is barely any transit for those without cars (and with high levels of poverty, many don’t have them), leading many to resort to hitchhiking.

Statistics lay the backdrop to Matthew Smiley’s *Highway of Tears*. There are 582 reported missing indigenous women in Canada, some towns along Highway 61 have a 92% unemployment rate, an indigenous woman is 4x more likely to be murdered in Canada than a non-indigenous woman. For audiences already familiar with the issues of violence native women face already, not all these numbers will be surprising – and it unfortunately numbers often conceal as much as they reveal, they can be dehumanizing or misleading. With his film, Smiley brings a humanizing approach, allowing his subjects to tell their own story. We are brought into the homes, the lives and the living conditions of the many indigenous communities in Northern British Columbia.

Racism within Canada is rarely discussed or acknowledged, and the government has been guilty of nothing short of genocide. The centuries of abuse, mistreatment and erasure are not so far behind us and it is clear that while many still live in the shadows of the residential school systems very little is being done to help rebuild a broken nation. In the various communities where Smiley brings his camera, nearly everyone he interviews has a family or a friend who went missing or went murdered. The incredible sense of loss is palpable – change is the only answer.

One of the great assets of the film is that it offers tangible solutions. The film features a wide variety of passionate activists who are doing their part to effect change, but government support is still very much needed. Some solutions are simple, such as establishing a reliable transit system in the area. While this does little to relieve the tension of poverty or abuse, it at least offers to women an opportunity to reach cities without resorting to hitchhiking.

While easier said than done, the need for change lies in the hands of a citizenship that needs to be more engaged in the actions of their government. Canadian politeness is often more of a fault than an asset in this regard, and difficult conversations are often displaced for easy ones. Smiley’s film and the work of men and women within the Native Community working hard to bring awareness are already doing great work, but it’s important to understand that as a society we undervalue and silences voices of indigenous people. It’s time for Canadians to start listening.

Sourced from ‘Highway Of Tears’ Is Essential Viewing For All Canadians by Justine Smith (2015)

**A: What kind of response are you hoping for from audiences?**

​Not everyone is going to walk away from the film wanting to take action and push for a national inquiry, but the one thing I truly hope, is that people walk away having learned about the root causes of the violence against the women along Highway 16 and how those tragic stories affect us all. It is not just the families, but entire communities that grieve the loss of their daughters and mothers. We all need to be accountable.

# Sourced from Q&A with director Matthew Smiley, CBC News (2014)

For on-going updated information, please access the Facebook page at: [***https://www.facebook.com/Highwayoftearsdocumentary***](https://www.facebook.com/Highwayoftearsdocumentary)

4. **Foster Child** (43 minutes) **& Richard Cardinal: Cry from a Diary of a Metis Child** (29 minutes)

Synopsis of *Foster Child*: A moving tribute to Richard Cardinal, a Métis adolescent who committed suicide in 1984. He had been taken from his home at the age of four because of family problems, and spent the rest of his seventeen short years moving in and out of twenty-eight foster homes, group homes and shelters in Alberta. A sensitive, articulate young man, Richard Cardinal left behind a diary upon which this film is based.

NFB

"Fosterchild" and "Richard Cardinal: Cry From A Diary Of A Metis Child," two NFB films, tell the true life, tragic stories of Native foster children who have gone through society's child welfare system.

"Richard Cardinal: Cry From A Diary Of A Metis Child" is so heart-wrenching one would prefer to believe it never happened but it did.

Cardinal, a victim of the child welfare system, had been shuffled through fourteen foster homes, a number of group homes and youth shelters. At 17 years-of-age, he hung himself. But he left behind a poignant diary that forced people to make changes to Alberta's out-dated Child Welfare Act.

In the film, Cardinal's older brother bitterly talks about some of the horrible experiences they had together. The foster parents of the two boys were also interviewed. But much of the basis of the film comes from the sad, gut-wrenching diary of Richard Cardinal.

Born in Fort Chipewyan, he lived there with his natural family. But the family's alcoholism was the major factor why the children were separated by Alberta Social Services. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police moved the children to Fort McMurray where they were given different foster parents. Richard and his older brother Charlie were housed together for the first while.

In the film, Charlie sadly says how much having a family meant to his younger brother. All Richard ever knew as family was Charlie. The older brother bitterly regrets not once ever having the opportunity to reunite with the other children when Richard was alive.During their time together Richard clung on to his older brother for love and caring until he had to go for psychological help. Although he was known to be quiet, rarely talking to anyone about his feelings, Richard was an eloquent writer at his young age as shown in the pain and anguish in his diary.

After his death, the media unleashed accusing questions at the conduct of Alberta Social Services and political leaders. Subsequently, people began to become more aware of the need for change in handling Native foster children. Today, Metis and Native leaders are repatriating children back to the reserve, to give them a sense of identity.

Gil Cardinal was another foster child who began a search for his roots. "Fosterchild" is a clean unstaged, unrehearsed story of Edmonton Gil Cardinal's search for his real family. As a child, Cardinal, sensed he didn't quite fit in. His skin color and last name were different. According to Cardinal, he grew up brown on the outside and white on the inside. After completing his education at NAIT and working at ACCESS. Cardinal went on to a career in film.

1985's "Fosterchild" gives the raw unpretentious feelings Gil Cardinal went through searching for his mother, Lucy Cardinal. The search was time-consuming and frustrating as Cardinal inquired about his background to Alberta Social Services but was denied information because of its policy of refusing to release such information. The department had a two inch thick file on him.

Cardinal continued his search and discovered his mother, Lucy Cardinal died in Edmonton's skid row. Lucy Cardinal had three boys she gave up to social services because she could not give them a better life. Gil Cardinal discovered his mother once lived on skid row and had a drinking problem that landed her in jail.

Cardinal deals with the image he has of his mother by talking to his friend, Maria Campbell. She explains that because Lucy was raised in residential school, it took away any opportunity to learn any parenting skills. During the 50's, there were no support groups for women raising children alone. It was a tough life.

In "Fosterchild", Gil Cardinal never gets the chance to meet his family. He had two brothers, but one passed away while his younger brother didn't want to talk. Then Cardinal finds out his father is alive, someone he never thought about. Gil always assumed he was the product of a "one-night stand". In the film, he leaves Edmonton for Calling Lake to find out about this man but the community doesn't want to talk about his father. Finally, Francis Cardinal tells him his father was Joe Decoine, his mother's uncle.

Standing on a street, just before the veterans' parade Gil meets Decoine. Decoine adamantly denies the possibility of being a father because he couldn't have children. Gil Cardinal is left standing on a street. His personal story is a common one of many Native foster children.

Both of these National Film Board films provide further evidence of the damaging effects of the personal and cultural dislocation Native children have had to face through generations.

Josie Auger, Windspeaker Staff Writer, Edmonton