

MTYP
Manitoba Theatre for Young People
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR: LESLEE SILVERMAN

Study Guide

An Illustrated History of the Anishnabe

by Ian Ross

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An Illustrated History of the Anishnabe

By Ian Ross

Director: **HERBIE BARNES**
Set Designer: **LOUIS OGEMAH**
Set Coordinator: **LINDA LEON**
Lighting Designer: **WAYNE BUSS**
Musician: **GERALD LAROCHE**
Stage Manager: **IVORY SEOL**

Cast:

CLIFFORD CARDINAL, JAMES DURHAM, IAN ROSS

Study Guide written by **ELLEN PATTERSON**

I. About the Playwright - IAN ROSS

In his own words: *Ian Ross is a guy who writes stuff and lives in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.*

In *An Illustrated History of the Anishnabe*, Ian Ross was able to integrate his talents as a playwright with his hilarious alter ego, *Joe from Winnipeg*. Ross wrote and performed *Joe from Winnipeg* monologues for CBC Radio and Television beginning in 1997, and has since published three collections from this series. *The Gap*, an Aboriginal story about love across the cultural divide, premiered at Prairie Theatre Exchange in 2001. *fareWel*, Ross's Governor-General's Award-winning play, completed a successful run at the 2001 Edinburgh Fringe Festival in Scotland, and his one-act play, *Bereav'd of Light*, was premiered at the Stratford Festival's Studio Theatre in 2002. In addition to the Governor-General's Award, Ross also won the John Hirsch Award for Most Promising Writer in 1996. Ian Ross was born in McCreary Manitoba. He calls the Reserve of Fairford, the Métis community of Kinosota and the city of Winnipeg home. He continues to write and live in Winnipeg. He has a Saulteaux mother and Métis father of Scottish descent.

II. A Message from the Playwright

Hey, I wrote this play for the same reason that I write everything, to create understanding. In this instance, understanding of how and why Aboriginal people are where they're at today.

III. About the Actors

Clifford Cardinal

Cliff is a twenty-four year old actor, writer, and musician from Toronto. He's done some short films (*Future Nation*, *Go Get Dad*, and *7 Minute Nightmare*) and he's done some plays. Most recently *Toronto at Dreamer's Rock* by Drew Hayden Taylor with Magnus Theatre, *Tales of an Urban Indian*, by Darrell Dennis with Green Thumb Theatre, for which he was nominated

for a Jessie Richardson Memorial Theatre award, and Kenneth T. Williams' *Three Little Birds*, acting alongside his mother, Tantoo Cardinal at Workshop West Theatre. In the future Cliff wants to keep writing plays, and playing punk rock music. Remember: there are thousands of people all over the world.

James Durham

James is thrilled to be in *An Illustrated History of The Anishnabe* again. Later this year he will appear in the world premiere of *Rick: The Rick Hansen Story*. James last toured with MTYP in *Smokescreen*. Last year James appeared in *Pride and Prejudice* and *Jitters* at Manitoba Theatre Centre, *Moonlight and Magnolias* at Prairie Theatre Exchange and Sondheim's *Company* with Dry Cold Productions. James is also a playwright; *The Big League*, originally produced by MTYP, will be touring British Columbia this fall with Carousel Theatre. James also serves as the president of the Manitoba Association of Playwrights and the Manitoba representative for the Playwrights' Guild of Canada. Love always to Leanne and Ethan.

IV. About the Production Staff

Herbie Barnes

An Ontario-based director, writer, actor and teacher, Herbie has worked extensively in television, film and theatre. His work with MTYP includes *Cranked* (director), *Russell's World* (playwright and title role), *An Illustrated History of the Anishnabe* (director), *Boy in the Treehouse* (director and title role), *Toronto at Dreamer's Rock* (director), *The Rememberer* (director) and the role of Bilbo Baggins in *The Hobbit*. Notable film credits include *Spirit Rider* with Graham Greene, *Dance Me Outside* with Adam Beach, *Hidden in America* and *Johnny Greyeyes*. Barnes' work for television includes *The Rez* (CBC) and *Tipi Tales* (YTV Treehouse/APTN).

Gérald Laroche

The JUNO Award winning master of the harmonica has been compared to the legends of the harmonica: Larry Adler, Sonny Terry and Sonny Boy Williamson. The sounds he creates with his myriad harmonicas is truly astonishing. His music is highly original as well, reflecting his French Canadian and Manitoba voyageur roots but incorporating the music of the world. His compositions express his past and present, the people he has met and the places he has been. These images explode from the harmonica when he plays and tells his stories and legends in French and English. In addition to over 60 various harmonicas, he also uses the penny whistle, Indian mouth bow, fiddle bow, jaw harp and other percussive toys to create his unique fusion of musical styles: French-Canadian, Zydeco, Cajun, boogie, African rhythms, blues and Celtic.

V. About the Production

An Illustrated History of the Anishnabe was premiered at Manitoba Theatre for Young People in January 2001 as a workshop production. At that time, a "working draft" of the play was presented as a staged reading for high school audiences, who were asked to respond and express their opinions and feelings about the material. The playwright considered the audience comments and suggestions when preparing the script for the full-scale production. This was an opportunity for students to understand how a script progresses from one draft

to the next. Scripts are never seen as “finished:” they grow and change with each production. This production will tour Manitoba schools from October 2009 to January 2010. As always, MTYP welcomes responses from students and educators.

VI. Pre-and post-show Quiz

The quiz on the following page is similar to the audience response questionnaire used during the workshop process. Use this quiz to explore your student’s knowledge of the issues before and after viewing the play.

VII. Questions for Discussion

- 1) Did the illustrations and slides increase your understanding of the issues and themes?
- 2) What was the significance of the muskrat story?
- 3) In your opinion, what action would the playwright like to see taken regarding Aboriginal people?
- 4) Should sports teams be allowed to use Aboriginal imagery in their logos?
- 5) Is Canada the only country with Aboriginal or indigenous people?
- 6) Should Aboriginal crafts be used as a symbol of Canada? Why or why not?
- 7) Describe the story of the Anishnabe as it has been told from a non-native point of view.
- 8) Discuss other groups who have struggled to tell their own story.

VIII. Classroom Activities

1) Museum.

Each student brings one or more artifacts from home that represent significant truths about their personal history. It can be an item relevant to their cultural background, a memento from a pivotal experience, or any object of high intrinsic value. Students should have their parent or guardian's permission to bring special objects from home, and the objects should be fairly small. On "Museum Day," students use their own desk or workspace to create an exhibit about themselves. Their artifacts should be displayed along with a card describing the artifact's meaning. What can others understand about the subject's life through viewing this object?

2) Collage: Myth and Reality

Collect photographs, text and images from newspapers, magazines etc. about Aboriginal people. Divide the images into two categories: those which reflect an accurate picture of today's Aboriginal people, and those which perpetuate the popular myths (e.g., Tonto, "noble savages," Pocahontas, "drunken indians," etc.)

3) What do we know? Where did we learn it?

Using the pre-show quiz as a starting point, hold a large-group discussion about Aboriginal people and the issues they face. Find articles in the local paper and discuss. Compare the differing opinions and knowledge that students have, and the sources of this information.

4) Guest speakers and field trips

Contact a local Aboriginal group or facility to arrange a tour or to invite a guest speaker. In Winnipeg, contact The Circle of Life Thunderbird House at 940-4240. Outside Winnipeg, contact a local Band Council or Friendship Centre.

IX. Drama and Language Arts Activities

1) Public Service Announcements:

Begin by discussing examples of public service announcements the students have seen about issues like racism, impaired driving, drug use, etc. Which are the most effective? Why? In small groups, students create a commercial or public service announcement, designed to change perceptions about the Aboriginal people. Perform the announcements live at school assemblies or, if you have access to a video camera, students can tape their announcements.

2) Point of View:

Start with a familiar story. Children's stories and fables are a good place to begin. Working in small groups, the class dramatizes the story twice, choosing two different points of view. For instance, they might choose to tell the story of Goldilocks from her point of view, and then from the bears'. They will see how the story changes depending on who is telling it. Then use stories from the news, from their own experience, or stories they have written, and try the same experiment. Try to find stories that contain a moral dilemma.

Show one half of the class "Point of View A" first, and one half "Point of View B" of the same story. If the story is one the audience has never heard before, are they most likely to accept the point of view they heard first?

Discuss works of fiction they have studied. Why does an author choose a particular point of view?

3) Animal legends:

Many animal legends are intended to entertain, teach a lesson, give a warning or explain a mystery. After reading and discussing a number of existing legends with your class, they might:

- a) Write an animal legend that teaches a lesson, gives a warning or explains a mystery.
- OR**
- b) Act out the Legend of the Muskrat or another native legend.

4) First Contact:

Research historical accounts of the first contact between European explorers and the Anishnabe OR have students write fictional accounts. Dramatize the account twice, telling the story from the Native and European points of view.

X. Independent Study Projects

- 1) Research the experiences of indigenous peoples in North and South America, Australia, Africa, etc. How do their experiences compare with those of First Nations people in Canada? Has any nation succeeded in peaceful co-habitation?
- 2) There is a Native spiritual belief that a person must consider the effects of all of their actions on the seventh generation to come after them. Write a short story or essay about how this belief would influence an average teenager's behaviour.
- 3) Research the issue of Native self-government and organize an in-class debate.

XI. Resources: Community Contacts, Suggested reading and websites

1) Community Contacts:

- Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre: 940-7020
 - www.mfnerc.org
- Métis Culture And Heritage Resource Centre: 956-7767
 - www.metisresourcecentre.mb.ca
- Urban Circle Training Centre: 589-4433
 - www.metisresourcecentre.mb.ca
- Ka Ni Kanichihk: 953-5820
 - www.kanikanichihk.ca
- Circle of Life Thunderbird House
 - www.thunderbirdhouse.com

2) Related reading:

- *A Fair Country* by John Ralston Saul
- *Will's Garden* by Lee Maracle
- *The Lesser Blessed* by Richard Van Camp
- *Toronto at Dreamer's Rock* by Drew Hayden Taylor
- *Millennium: Tribal Wisdom and the Modern World* by David Maybury-Lewis
- *Indigenous Peoples of the World: An Introduction to their Past, Present and Future* by Brian Goehring
- *The Book of Joe* by Ian Ross
- *FareWel* by Ian Ross
- *The Infested Blanket* by Eric Robinson and Henry Bird Quinney
- *Tortured People: The Politics of Colonization* by Howard Adams

3) Websites:

- www.shannonthunderbird.com/First%20Nations%20Teaching%20Menu.htm

The web site of an Aboriginal educator, the spiritualism page contains some stories and affirmations on Aboriginal spiritual teachings.

- www.stemnet.nf.ca/~bjeddore

A curriculum guide to the history of the Mi'kmaq people in Conne River Newfoundland.

- www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca:

Contains links pertaining to Aboriginal languages, heritage and culture



WORKSHOPS AT MTYP

MTYP's drama workshops provide a playful and spontaneous approach to learning that is based on a young person's natural curiosity and desire to participate. We can come to your school or host your students at MTYP at The Forks.

Play-related workshops

Every play in our season has a corresponding workshop, designed to enhance your students' comprehension and enjoyment of the production while developing the key issues, themes, and styles presented in the play.

An Illustrated History of the Anishnabe

During this celebration of past and present, students will explore ideas about who they are and where they've come from. This workshop highlights essential concepts of story structure and communications as participants begin passing down their own oral histories to one another.

To book a **PLAY-RELATED WORKSHOP**, call the School Programs Coordinator, at **954-1704**, or email: schoolprograms@mtyp.ca

Other workshops available

- Creative Drama
- Theatre Crafts
- Clown Academy
- Improv Power!
- Voice and Movement
- Acting for the Camera

Or...Customize Your Own Dramatic Workshop!

Do you have something else in mind? Any workshop can be customized to specifically meet the needs of your curriculum. MTYP also offers **Professional Development for Educators**, as well as residencies for a more intensive drama experience.

To book a workshop or to get a FREE Drama Resource Brochure, call Loc Lu, Drama Outreach Coordinator at 947-0394 ext. 227 or email llu@mtyp.ca