

## **GENERAL AND DESCRIPTIVE**

### **INTRODUCTION TO THE EXHIBITION**

The Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (MAC) offers you this audio description resource for the exhibition: *Alanis Obomsawin: The Children Have to Hear Another Story*, currently on display at Place Ville Marie until January 26, 2025.

This resource is designed for those who are blind or have low vision, as well as anyone who wishes to enrich their experience of the exhibition's visual content. This presentation serves as an introduction of the exhibition and explains how it is organised.

The audio description resource of this exhibition was designed and produced by Technoleads, in collaboration with the RAAMM.

The analog audio device provided with headphones is equipped with a numeric keypad; number 5, in the centre, is marked with a raised dot. In the middle of the line above the numeric keypad, there is a button to pause or resume the audio track. To the left and right of this button, the plus and minus signs are used to adjust the volume.

In the bottom left corner of the keypad, there is a red button used to stop the audio track. This red button can also be used to clear the number entered. There is no option to go back or increase audio speed.

To listen to any of the films in the exhibition, enter the number indicated in the exhibit space. Of these films, four are available with audio description, running a total duration of approximately three and a half hours.

Each of these audio-described films is accompanied by a one to two minute long presentation. To listen to these presentations, enter 1 and then the number assigned to the film.

Please note that there is a short delay after you enter the number for a video. In addition, some films include passages in different languages, which are not systematically translated.

At the welcome desk, you can also find a binder of resources to help you navigate the exhibition space. It contains a tactile room map, which indicates the location of the audio-described films with the corresponding numbers in braille and large print.

You will also find in this binder the texts of the audio-described resource in large print and a brief presentation of the exhibition in braille.

We now welcome you to discover this exhibition, which has travelled from Berlin to Toronto via Vancouver. It is dedicated to the work of Abenaki filmmaker, activist and singer Alanis Obomsawin, one of the most acclaimed Indigenous directors in the world.

Alanis Obomsawin began her career as a singer and storyteller before turning to film in 1967, as a consultant for the National Film Board of Canada (NFB), where she has made 65 films to date.

She has consistently succeeded in using public platforms to advance Indigenous concerns and tell Indigenous stories. She has created a model of Indigenous cinema that privileges the voices of her subjects and challenges the foundations of the global system created by colonialism, that still exists and with which we must contend today.

Organised by decade, this retrospective provides an exhaustive panorama of her cinematographic, visual and musical work, enhanced by archival documents

and reports that lend new insight into her practice.

The exhibition's spatial layout highlights the significant changes seen over time.

Each of the exhibition's six sections is structured around a selection of the artist's most important films, accompanied by various works and documents that provide context. Her albums, *Indian Songs* and *Bush Lady*, are played in the exhibition, and some of her material works, such as engravings, masks and handmade toys are also presented.

Of the four films offered with audio description, three are presented in the large space at the back. The sections with green and turquoise walls are dedicated to works dating from the 1980s and 2000s.

The following films are found in this space:

- the short narrative film *Sigwan*, number 12 on the audio device, and number 112 to listen to the presentation ;
- the documentary, *Incident at Restigouche*, number 19, and number 119 for the presentation ;
- And the documentary *Richard Cardinal : Cry From a Diary of a Métis Child*, number 21, and number 121 for the presentation.

The fourth audio-described film is presented in the room located directly opposite the museum entrance, the one dedicated to films from the 1990s. It is the feature-length documentary, *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance*, at number 24, with a presentation at number 124. In this room with walls painted carmine

red, a curtain of the same colour separates a vestibule from a screening room with 24 red chairs with armrests, resembling a cinema.

Please note that, throughout the exhibition, some videos and documents may contain information that is no longer current or terms that are no longer used or accepted today.

Finally, in the last section of the large back room, you will find an area called The Medicine Room (Thontenonhkwa'tsherano'onhnha), a versatile space which exists to encourage all visitors to process the content of the exhibition in a way that centres on healing and the creation of a better future. This space includes a reading lounge and an interactive



installation where everyone is encouraged to participate by sharing their own personal stories.

You may now continue your visit by choosing one of the films presented in the exhibition, or, if you would like to learn more about Alanis Obomsawin, a complementary presentation will follow.

Alanis Obomsawin became known to the media and the public in the 1960s through her songs and speeches on Indigenous issues. It was at this time that she began to put into practice the idea that gives this exhibition its title: that children need to hear another story about Indigenous people. Every year since then, she has shared stories and given handmade toys to the children of Odanak.

In the late 1960s, she began her collaboration with the NFB, which would broadcast her work starting in the 1970s.

She has worked there ever since and is now the only remaining filmmaker on staff. The films she made during these early years were intended to provide her Indigenous subjects the opportunity to tell their own stories.

In the 1980s, Obomsawin's films reflected the evolution of treaty rights movements and demands for Indigenous sovereignty against government organisations, particularly in relation to social services and land management.

In the following decade, the 1990s, she devoted most of her energy as a filmmaker to documenting the effects of what is often called the Oka Crisis, known as the Kanehsatà:ke resistance to many Indigenous people.

In the 2000s, as Indigenous activism continued across Canada, there were quiet changes within institutions, attitudes evolved, and doors began to open. Obomsawin's films from this decade focus on this evolution; moreover, several of her productions from this period are among her most personal works.

Since 2010, Indigenous issues have been at the forefront of public debate across Canada, and “decolonization” in various ways has become a

priority for many academic, cultural, and political institutions. The importance of Obomsawin's work in the global debate on decolonization has never been more evident. The artist continues to play an active role, notably by exploring her personal archives and creating a new film series.