

TUNNIIT: RETRACING THE LINES OF INUIT TATTOOS



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TUNNIIT: RETRACING THE LINES OF INUIT TATTOOS

Directed by Alethea Arnaquq-Baril

2010 | Canada | 50 min

TEACHER'S GUIDE

This guide has been designed to help teachers and students enrich their experience of documentary film by providing support in the form of questions and activities. There are a range of questions that will help teachers frame discussions with their classes, activities for before, during and after viewing the film, and some web links that provide starting points for further research or discussion. In separate packages, there will also be support materials available with information regarding general viewing and teaching principles for documentary film and the fundamental aspects of making documentary films.

The Film

Tunniit details young Inuk director Alethea Arnaquq-Baril's journey to discover more about the Inuit tradition of facial tattooing. Tattoos were once worn by Inuit women to mark their entry into adulthood, but disappeared during the last 100 years due to the influence of Christian missionaries, who disapproved of the "shamanistic" practice. Over the course of the film, Arnaquq-Baril travels to several Inuit communities to speak to elders who still remember the art of tattooing and the cultural significance behind it. When Arnaquq-Baril decides to get her own facial tattoos, her fiancé is supportive, but her mother and father are not. *Tunniit* explores what it means to not only revive a cultural practice but wear that practice as a marker of identity.

The Filmmaker

Director Alethea Arnaquq-Baril was born and raised in Iqaluit, Nunavut. Her production company, Unikkaat Studios Inc., creates Inuit cultural documentaries and Inuktitut-language productions. Arnaquq-Baril's other work includes co-producing *Experimental Eskimos* and directing the short film *Inuit High Kick*.

Educational package written and compiled by Suzanne Methot
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VIEWING THE FILM WITH STUDENTS

There are important themes in this film that have broad implications for students and their futures.

Take time to activate your students' background understanding of these themes before viewing.

This will help them as they come to their own understanding and develop their critical abilities.

The following three subsections, on this page, are intended to provide you with a range of pre-viewing, viewing and post-viewing activities. They are followed by a set of questions based upon the film's larger thematic domains, some follow-up questions and quotations, sample curricular outcomes, and a page of web links for further investigation.

Pre-Viewing Activities

Play the first 40 seconds of the film without sound, pausing on each archival photograph, so students can see close-up images of Inuit women with traditional tattoos. (You can also take screen shots and print them out for students to look at in small groups.) As a prediction and visual literacy exercise, and to determine background knowledge, ask students:

- Who are these women/where are they from?
- Why might these women be wearing tattoos?
- What might the images in the tattoos relate to?

With the sound on, play the first 40 seconds of *Tunniit*, which features archival photographs with voiceover narration. Ask students why they think the filmmaker used this technique. How does this technique attract the viewer? How does it set the tone? What is the difference between black-and-white images and colour images?

Print the quotations from the Extension Activities on individual sheets of paper. Have students work in small groups or in pairs to discuss the ideas in the quotations. Then ask them to share their conclusions with the large group. As they discuss the quotations, ask students to think about the following:

- What is the main conflict in this film? How do you know this?
- From whose perspective is this story told? How do you know this?
- What values are being promoted? How do you know this?
- Whose point of view do the values represent? Are your values represented? Why or why not?

Have a large-group discussion about one of the Extension Activities quotations. Ask students to structure their discussion around the themes of identity, relationships, sovereignty and challenges.

Viewing Activities

Have students take notes on the connections they see between the issues in this film and one of the Big Ideas in the Big Questions/Ideas/Themes section of this guide.

Have students describe what they see in the film. Ask them to withhold judgment and observe carefully. They can write notes or give an oral description.

Ask students to create a mind map as they watch the film. The mind map should contain the following key words: conflicts, techniques, purpose and perspective. To get students started, use the following prompts:

- What are the main conflicts we encounter in this film? Were the conflicts resolved at the end of the film? Why or why not?
- Who produced this media text, and for what purpose? Who profits if the message is accepted? Who may be disadvantaged?
- How would this story be different if told from the perspective of another character in the film?

Have students jot down three questions for discussion that the film raises in their minds.

Post-Viewing Activities

Ask students if the predictions they made in the first Pre-Viewing Activity were correct. Have them give specific evidence from the film—facts revealed in images or voiceover/dialogue—that supports or disproves their prediction.

Have a large-group discussion guided by student questions written during the last Viewing Activity.

Have students revisit the quotations they discussed during the third Pre-Viewing Activity. Have a large-group discussion to see whether their opinions have changed after viewing the film.

Have students build a conceptual map showing the web of ideas, topics and associated subtopics in the film. Using the conceptual map as a guide, ask students to create questions they think will represent the important issues. Then, using the questions and the conceptual map, ask students to make interconnections among elements of the text (film). This should take the form of an argument, including a thesis statement and evidence from the text. Have students make a final judgment about the text based on the argument they created above. Students will learn that their evaluations and feelings are informed by description, analysis and interpretation.

Have students reflect on the processes of description, interpretation and evaluation they completed during the Pre-Viewing, Viewing and Post-Viewing activities. Ask students to write a personal reflection summarizing what they have learned and how the processes of describing, interpreting and evaluating have informed their understanding of the film.

Have students research Inuit tattooing and create a two-page newsletter that summarizes their findings. They should also include a personal opinion on the future of Inuit tattooing, supported by information from the film. The newsletter should include at least two of the following subtopics: history of Inuit tattooing, cultural meaning of Inuit tattoos and the reasons for the loss of Inuit traditions including tattooing. The newsletter should contain text, illustrations and at least one chart or graph. To get them started, have them visit the websites listed in the Websites and Online Resources section of this package.

Have students write a letter to the creator of this media text. Is the film an effective tool? How would students produce the text differently?

THE BIG QUESTIONS/IDEAS/THEMES

Multiple Perspectives

What is the subject of this film? Can you determine the filmmakers' perspective on this subject? What evidence can you find in the film to support your view?

How does this film help you analyze and interpret points of view about issues that concern people?

Does the filmmakers' perspective foster respect for diversity and an inclusive society? If so, how?

Identity

Whose story is told in this documentary? Whose story is not told? How does this story, and the way it is told, help you understand your own community/life?

How do the people in this film identify with their community? What are the common bonds among the people in this film? What challenges do they face in expressing their identity?

What film techniques do the filmmakers use to convey the identity of the people in this film?

Citizenship

What insights does this documentary offer about the ideals of good citizenship in the community depicted in this film?

How does the film deal with issues of freedom, equality, human dignity, and individual and collective rights and responsibilities?

Change and Continuity

How does this film help you understand a community's values and its attitudes towards an issue at a particular time?

What changes do the people in the film experience? What causes those changes? What are the consequences of those changes for the people in the documentary?

Culture and Community

Which aspects of a people's culture does this film focus on? Why do you think the filmmakers focused on those aspects?

How do the images, themes and message of this film help you understand the filmmakers' attitude towards the subject?

What do you think might have been the intended audience's attitude towards the documentary subject?

Individuals, Societies and Economic Decisions

What economic systems are at work in this film? What are some of the causes and effects of the economic decisions made by the people in the film's community?

Does money play a part in the decisions being made in the film and what does it tell you about their local culture?

Power and Governance

What system of government control do we see in this documentary? How is power distributed within this society?

What are the implications of that distribution on issues affecting the people's well-being and freedom?

Global Connections

What global issues are addressed in this film? What is the filmmakers' point of view on the opportunities and challenges of those issues?

Adapted from NFB Documentary Lens: <http://www.nfb.ca>

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

The film mentions other Inuit traditions (drum dancing and throat singing) that almost died out after the Inuit were converted to Christianity by European missionaries. Have students view online videos about Inuit throat singing. View this link for cultural significance (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Phr1HVwrjIQ&feature=relmfu>). View this one for a description of the sounds and technique (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KNb2ZDjeiU4>). Then ask students to get into small groups and create a soundscape composition that reflects something of significance to their own lives (e.g., getting up in the morning, diving for the ball in a basketball or soccer game, listening to parents or elders at home). Students should not imitate Inuit singing; they should create their own soundscape by re-creating sounds from their own environments. After each small group has performed their piece for the large group, have a large-group discussion on the reasons behind cultural traditions such as singing and dancing. How do these traditions preserve cultural frameworks, ideas, perspectives, experiences and histories? What happens when cultures lose their artistic traditions?

Additional Questions for Pre-Viewing or Post-Viewing Activities

How does the loss of traditional Inuit tattooing relate to and reflect the relationship Aboriginal Peoples have with the Canadian government? Why does the filmmaker include footage of the Canadian government's apology to First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples on the issue of residential schools? What does the issue of residential schools have to do with both Inuit tattooing and the relationship between the Inuit and the Canadian government?

How would not being able to decide one's own cultural traditions around female puberty affect a person's identity?

How might the concept of sovereignty—the right to govern oneself—relate to director Alethea Arnaquq-Baril's decision to get traditional Inuit tattoos?

How does the issue of Inuit tattoos sum up some of the challenges Inuit youth face today?

Quotations From the Film to Explore

"I see how much I've missed out on. I'm 27 and I've never sewn my own parka. I'm clumsy at sharpening my ulu blade. I don't know how to butcher and prepare seal meat. These are the most basic skills of a woman my age. I feel like there's a huge hole in my heart, and I need to fill it with this knowledge. Every time I learn something new, a little piece of me is healed."

"[Tattooing] wasn't only for beauty; it was also a rite of passage, to become a real woman."

"[The missionaries] believed that the traditional practices should be eradicated."

"Drum dancing and throat singing are among the many traditions that vanished from daily life. Back then, we were a semi-nomadic people, with our own rich teaching stories, belief systems and moral structures. Everyone had a role in a camp. The camp leader was either a shaman or worked closely with one."

"Throat singing is one aspect of Inuit culture that the missionaries—at least the Anglican missionaries—did their best to bury. I think the reason why the missionaries were against it is because it's so sensual."

"The church gained influence by taking children and putting them into local, church-run, community residential schools. From the age of five or six, many children were taught a culture and value system completely different from their parents. This had an enormous cultural impact and created a generational rift that exists to this day."

"We're in a transition period right now. We haven't found our balance yet. The ones without the knowledge and those who have the knowledge—it is still possible to meet in the middle and for things to turn out well. But at the moment they're not understanding each other."

"I think about today's youth and I want them to lead good lives. The old traditional values, the old rules of right and wrong—if the youth today were taught more about them, I think it could help them lead better lives."

"Inuit culture is useful. It is very powerful. Traditional knowledge is vast and it still has great strength today."

POST-VIEWING ACTIVITY: COMMUNICATING THROUGH VISUAL TEXT

Name: _____ Date: _____ Mark: _____ /40 (See rubric)

Tunniit director Alethea Arnaquq-Baril says on her website:

"Inuit didn't have a writing system before European contact, and to this day, there is a serious lack of Inuktitut reading materials. We are an oral culture, and so that means our culture and history, up until recently, has mostly been undocumented, or documented by outsiders. This is changing slowly, but there is an enormous amount of knowledge and history that needs to be documented in a short period of time, while the last elders that lived traditionally out on the land are still alive. Filmmaking is such a natural and easy way for Inuit to do this important work. Documentary filmmaking is also a powerful tool for communicating with the outside world. The Arctic is a part of the world that is under attack in so many ways (Western cultural domination, international disputes over Arctic sovereignty for access to subsurface riches, and the effects of climate change on Inuit and our wildlife, etc.). Probably the most powerful thing I could do for myself and my fellow Inuit is to be a documentary filmmaker, because I don't know how else I can contribute to helping our voices be heard on the world stage, on issues that are critical to us."

For this assignment, your group will be responsible for creating your own three- to five-minute video about a local issue that you want to communicate to the "outside world." The issue can be cultural, environmental, political, economic or any combination of the above. You may use whatever technology is available, such as cellphones or digital-camera video.

Before you start making your film, your group must create:

- A treatment that explains the concept behind your video (a treatment tells the story of the video in paragraph form—it's an easy-to-read description of what happens; very little dialogue is used).
- A storyboard that will assist your group in planning and directing the video (storyboards use very simple drawings as a guideline to the video's images and structure).
- A list that details the techniques you will use to command the attention of your audience, i.e., technical (lighting, shooting, transitions, locations, sound, effects) and content (humour, emotion, story, structure, characters, audience identification).

Before filming begins, your group will present your treatment to the large group as an oral presentation and receive your teacher's input and/or approval for your storyboards.

After your video is complete, your group will have an informal discussion with the large group or with your teacher in which you reflect on the process of describing your video and the ideas in it (writing the treatment), the process of interpretation (creating the storyboard and deciding on techniques) and the process of evaluation (getting input on your storyboard). Through this discussion, your group should aim to create awareness of how the processes of description, interpretation and evaluation contributed to the creation of your video and to your understanding of media texts. How are visual texts different from or the same as written texts? How might documentation by outsiders affect the integrity of a text?

You may also use ideas from the Pre-Viewing, Viewing and Post-Viewing activities/discussions, the questions from the Big Ideas section and the rubric categories to help guide the creation of your video and your paper.

COMMUNICATING THROUGH VISUAL TEXT RUBRIC

Name: _____ Group: _____

Criteria	Level 1 (50-59%)	Level 2 (60-69%)	Level 3 (70-79%)	Level 4 (80-100%)
Knowledge and Understanding	5.0 5.2 5.4 5.6 5.8	6.0 6.2 6.4 6.6 6.8	7.0 7.2 7.4 7.6 7.8	8.0 8.2 8.5 9.0 10
Understands relationship between type of text and message it communicates	Demonstrates limited understanding of relationship between concepts	Demonstrates some understanding of relationship between concepts	Demonstrates considerable understanding of relationship between concepts	Demonstrates thorough and insightful understanding of relationship between concepts
Thinking/Inquiry	5.0 5.2 5.4 5.6 5.8	6.0 6.2 6.4 6.6 6.8	7.0 7.2 7.4 7.6 7.8	8.0 8.2 8.5 9.0 10
Critical and creative thinking skills; inquiry skills (e.g., planning, selecting strategies and resources, analyzing and interpreting information)	Uses critical and creative thinking skills with limited effectiveness; applies few of the skills involved in an inquiry process	Uses critical and creative thinking skills with moderate effectiveness; applies some of the skills involved in an inquiry process	Uses critical and creative thinking skills with considerable effectiveness; applies most of the skills involved in an inquiry process	Uses critical and creative thinking skills with a high degree of effectiveness; applies all or almost all of the skills involved in an inquiry process
Communication	5.0 5.2 5.4 5.6 5.8	6.0 6.2 6.4 6.6 6.8	7.0 7.2 7.4 7.6 7.8	8.0 8.2 8.5 9.0 10
Uses language, symbols and visual images to convey relevant information and ideas	Communicates relevant information and ideas with limited clarity; uses language, symbols and visual images with limited accuracy and effectiveness	Communicates relevant information and ideas with some clarity; uses language, symbols and visual images with some accuracy and effectiveness	Communicates relevant information and ideas with clarity; uses language, symbols and visual images with considerable accuracy and effectiveness	Communicates relevant information and ideas with clarity and insight; uses language, symbols and visual images with a high degree of accuracy and effectiveness
Application	5.0 5.2 5.4 5.6 5.8	6.0 6.2 6.4 6.6 6.8	7.0 7.2 7.4 7.6 7.8	8.0 8.2 8.5 9.0 10
Makes connections between personal experiences and Native Studies, and between subjects studied and the world outside the school	Makes connections with limited effectiveness	Makes connections with moderate effectiveness	Makes connections with considerable effectiveness	Makes connections with a high degree of effectiveness

Comments:

Total: _____/40

EXAMPLES OF CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

COURSE	OVERALL EXPECTATIONS
Grade 9 Native Studies: Expressing Aboriginal Cultures, Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe the elements of culture reflected in various art forms. • demonstrate understanding of how Aboriginal art forms reflect cultural identity. • demonstrate understanding of traditional Aboriginal forms of expression and their influence on the portrayal of Aboriginal identity in contemporary art forms. • demonstrate understanding of the relationships among Aboriginal Peoples, their environments and art forms. • identify how specific Aboriginal art forms reflect aspects of the society that produced them. • explain how art forms can be an expression of sovereignty. • demonstrate how Aboriginal art affirms Aboriginal cultures. • demonstrate understanding of issues related to the production of Aboriginal art forms. • identify how new and evolving art forms reclaim, revive and sustain Aboriginal cultures.
Grade 10 Native Studies: Aboriginal Peoples in Canada, Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate understanding of the experiences of Aboriginal Peoples in 20th-century Canadian history. • explain how Canadian government policies have affected Aboriginal identity in the 20th century. • describe different types of relationships that Aboriginal Peoples have established with Canada. • identify historic and contemporary events affecting the self-determination of Aboriginal Peoples. • describe the many aspects of Aboriginal cultural identity. • describe how Aboriginal Peoples have adapted to change. • research and explain historical topics and issues related to Aboriginal Peoples. • demonstrate understanding of how to analyze and evaluate information when conducting research on an historical topic or issue.
Grade 11 Native Studies: Current Aboriginal Issues in Canada, University/ College Prep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate an understanding of the influences on Aboriginal societies that have an impact on their sense of identity. • describe Aboriginal perspectives related to issues of identity and sovereignty. • describe how Aboriginal Peoples adapt to external forces. • identify social, political and economic issues currently being addressed by Aboriginal individuals and communities in Canada. • identify the challenges facing Aboriginal youth in Canada and suggest how these challenges can be addressed at a personal, community and governmental level.
Grade 11 Native Studies: Aboriginal Beliefs, Values and Aspirations in Contemporary Society, College Prep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe traditional and contemporary beliefs and values of Aboriginal cultures that influence present-day activities and behaviours. • identify aspects of cultural identity related to specific Aboriginal Peoples. • compare Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal perspectives on the contemporary cultural identities of Aboriginal Peoples. • demonstrate an understanding of the cultural practices of Aboriginal Peoples. • demonstrate an understanding of the varying perspectives on Aboriginal Peoples' right to self-determination. • demonstrate an understanding of how traditional teachings and contemporary beliefs are the foundation of Aboriginal self-determination. • describe the efforts of Aboriginal Peoples to attain autonomy in their lives. • describe how contemporary Aboriginal communities assert their autonomy through a blend of traditional and modern practices.

COURSE	OVERALL EXPECTATIONS
Grade 11 Native Studies: Aboriginal Beliefs, Values and Aspirations in Contemporary Society, Workplace Prep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify aspects of cultural identity related to specific Aboriginal Peoples. • identify aspects of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal perspectives on the contemporary cultural identities of Aboriginal Peoples. • describe the efforts and successes of Aboriginal Peoples to protect and maintain their cultures and languages. • demonstrate an understanding of the issues facing Aboriginal youth in their interaction with Canadian society. • identify traditional teachings and contemporary beliefs that promote Aboriginal self-determination. • describe the efforts of Aboriginal Peoples to attain autonomy in their lives. • describe how contemporary Aboriginal communities assert their autonomy through a blend of traditional and modern practices. • demonstrate an understanding of the challenges facing Aboriginal youth.
Grade 11 & 12 English, University/College/ Workplace Prep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate an understanding of a variety of media texts. • identify some media forms and explain how the conventions and techniques associated with them are used to create meaning. • reflect on and identify their strengths as media interpreters and creators, areas for improvement and the strategies they found most helpful in understanding media texts.

WEBSITES AND ONLINE RESOURCES

The *Canadian Encyclopedia* entry on the Inuit contains information about tattoos and other aspects of Inuit culture.

<http://thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/native-people-arctic>

This blog, written by an Aboriginal student at the University of British Columbia who was awarded the UBC-Okanagan Undergraduate Research Award to study indigenous tattoos, contains information on tattoos in several indigenous cultures, as well as photos of Inuit tattoos from the National Archives of Canada.

<http://indigenoustattooing.com/blog/category/inuit-tattooing>

This website takes an historical/anthropological look at Inuit tattoos and tattoos in other indigenous cultures.

http://www.larskrutak.com/articles/Thread_Needle/index.html

This *Northern News Service* article shows that many Inuit women are reviving the tattooing tradition.

http://www.nnsl.com/frames/newspapers/2008-06/jun9_08fc.html

This website features an interview with director Alethea Arnaquq-Baril.

http://www.shedoesthecity.com/an_interview_with_alethea_arnaquq_baril_director_of_inuit_high_kick

The official website of Unikkaar Studios Inc. features the work of Alethea Arnaquq-Baril.

<http://www.unikkaat.com>

Various Links for Lesson Plan Ideas, Media Awareness, Critical Literacy and Documentary Films

Center for Media Literacy: A U.S. website which provides several resources for making, understanding and criticizing media.

<http://www.medialit.org>

Hot Docs Library: Dozens of online Canadian documentaries, including a number with education support material to aid with classroom viewing.

<http://www.hotdocslibrary.ca>

Hot Docs' Looking at Documentaries: A teaching guide that sets out questions designed to help teachers include the study of documentary film in their curriculum. Free PDF download.

<http://www.hotdocs.ca/youth>

Media Awareness: A Canadian non-profit media education and Internet literacy resource library.

<http://www.media-awareness.ca>

NFB Education: Rich in resources and activities.

<http://www.nfb.ca/education>

CAMPUS: Your online media solution from the NFB. Ontario teachers—activate your profile today at

<http://www.nfb.ca/campus/go>