

BLOCKADE

◆ ALGONQUINS ◆
◆ DEFEND THE FOREST ◆

The Barriere Lake Algonquins have lived and hunted in the forests at the headwaters of the Ottawa River for thousands of years. Since the 1960s, they have watched those forests being decimated by clear-cut logging. In September 1989, they decided that they had seen enough. The band blockaded six logging roads in the area and demanded that the Canadian Parliament and the Quebec government address their concerns.

Blockade follows a small group of Native people as they take on the government and the logging industry in a struggle to save their traditional hunting grounds and way of life. It is a film that raises important questions about our attitude towards the local and global environment, the exploitation of our natural resources, and the rights and treatment of Native people.

Director: Boyce Richardson

Producer: Mark Zannis

26 minutes 45 seconds
Order number: C 9190 092



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VHS

113C
9190 092



This video is suitable for the deaf and hearing impaired.
Closed-captioned. A decoder is required.



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B L O C K A D E : ALGONQUINS DEFEND THE FOREST

The Barriere Lake Algonquins live on the La Verendrye Wildlife Reserve in Quebec. In the 1960s, their way of life came under attack with the introduction of clear-cut logging. Roads were cleared through the Algonquins' traditional hunting grounds and acre after acre of forest was mowed down by heavy machinery.

For the next twenty years, logging continued unabated. By the late 1980's, the natural habitat of game and wildlife had been severely disrupted. Citing a United Nations study called **The Bruntland Commission Report**, the Algonquins demanded that the federal and provincial governments listen to their concerns and take action to stop the devastation.

Published in 1987, the report focused on the global environment and its development. The report recommended a policy of "sustainable development," an approach advocating long-term planning by government and industry for the future development of the world's resources. The authors of the report also advised world governments to recognize the rights and traditions of their indigenous people. They urged that Native people be given a decisive voice in decisions pertaining to the use and development of their land.

The Canadian government had enthusiastically endorsed the recommendations of **The Bruntland Commission Report**. As a result, the Algonquins were convinced that their concerns would be addressed at the federal and provincial levels. They were wrong.

After years of unsuccessfully lobbying the government for a hearing, the

community decided that it was time for more drastic action. Under the leadership of their Chief, Jean-Maurice Matchewan, the community blockaded six new logging roads. They refused to allow workers into the area until both government and industry responded to their demand for a moratorium on logging.

Filmed on location in the La Verendrye Wildlife Reserve during the period of the blockade, this film chronicles the Algonquin resistance. It explores how a tentative act of defiance grew into a well-organized, peaceful protest that challenged both industry and the state. It provides an understanding of the events leading up to the summer of 1990, when Native groups across Canada blockaded roads and bridges and disrupted communications in an unprecedented manner.

AUDIENCES

Of particular interest to Native and environmental groups, this film is suitable for History, Current Affairs, Political Science and Sociology classes, at the Secondary and Post-Secondary level, to stimulate discussion on issues related to the environment, the economy and Native rights. Community groups, professional associations and government institutions can use this film as a tool for discussion and development.

THEMES FOR DISCUSSION

The issue of Native rights, land claims and control has drawn a great deal of media attention in recent years. Survey media reports on Native issues and compare them to the issues raised in

this film. Are there similar concerns that unite Native groups across the country? How have governments responded and why?

Can acts of civil disobedience, like the one undertaken by the Barriere Lake Algonquins, be a productive route to social change? Research examples and debate.

In a "free market" economic system, can and should governments take more serious action to regulate industry to protect the rights of citizens and preserve the natural environment?

Should the United Nations be given the power to force world governments to act on problems related to human rights and the global environment?

RELATED NFB FILMS

- **Uranium**, a film about uranium mining on Native land and its impact on the country and the community. (C 0190 053)
- **Hunters and Bombers**, a film about the environmental and political implications of low level military jet training flights over Native land in Labrador. (C 0190 130)
- **Fort Good Hope**, a film about the Berger Inquiry into the MacKenzie Valley pipeline and its possible impact on Native people. (C 0177 003)

RECOMMENDED READING

_____. *Our Common Future: World Commission on Environment and Development*. Oxford University Press, 1987.

Richardson, Boyce. *Time to Change*. Summerhill Press, 1990.

Directed and written by
BOYCE RICHARDSON

Editor
TORBEN SCHIOLER

Cinematography
BARRY PERLES

Location Sound
HANS OOMES
MARIE-FRANCE DELAGRAVE

Camera Assistants
NASH READ
DAWN NICHOL

Research & Narration
BOYCE RICHARDSON

Sound Editor
PAUL DEMERS

Assistant Sound Editor
JEAN-PIERRE VIAU

Foley Artist
SERGE GODIER

Re-recording
HANS PETER STROBL
ADRIAN CROLL

Past-production
GRACE AVRITH

Unit Administrator
ROBERT SPENCE

Producer
MARK ZANNIS

Executive Producer
COLIN NEALE

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