

# BEATING THE STREETS

A National Film Board of Canada Release



"A truly compelling documentary."

—See Magazine (Edmonton)

**Beating the Streets** traces six years in the lives of Marilyn Brighteyes and Lance Marty, two inner-city Aboriginal teenagers struggling to turn their lives around. And it is the story of Joe Cloutier, the teacher — and former dropout — determined to help them.

In **Beating the Streets**, Marilyn and Lance candidly discuss the abuse and violence that drove them into prostitution and drug dealing. The video also introduces Joe's innovative approach, combining alternative education and popular theatre as a way to get young people off the streets.

The film begins in 1986, when Joe creates the Inner City Drama Association (ICDA) for teens like Marilyn and Lance. They participate in theatre workshops led by actors like Tantoo Cardinal (*Dances with Wolves*) and their plays explore important issues like substance abuse, family violence, suicide and racism. Performances lead to discussions with the audience in an effort to seek healthy solutions.

Then, in 1993, Lance encourages Joe to take on the immense challenge of opening an alternative school — Inner City High — for teens at risk. And we witness a remarkable transformation in Lance and Marilyn as they become leaders at the school.

Narrated by Tom Jackson (*North of 60*) Director: Lorna Thomas  
Producers: Lorna Thomas (Lorna Thomas Productions Inc.),  
Jerry Krepakevich (NFB)

48 minutes Order number: C9198 025

Produced by Lorna Thomas Productions Inc., in co-production with the National Film Board of Canada, with the assistance of Heritage Canada, Alberta Foundation for the Performing Arts, Health Canada, CBC Alberta, Film and Video Arts Society of Alberta, Native Counselling Services of Alberta and Alberta Community Development.



Closed captioned. A decoder is required.

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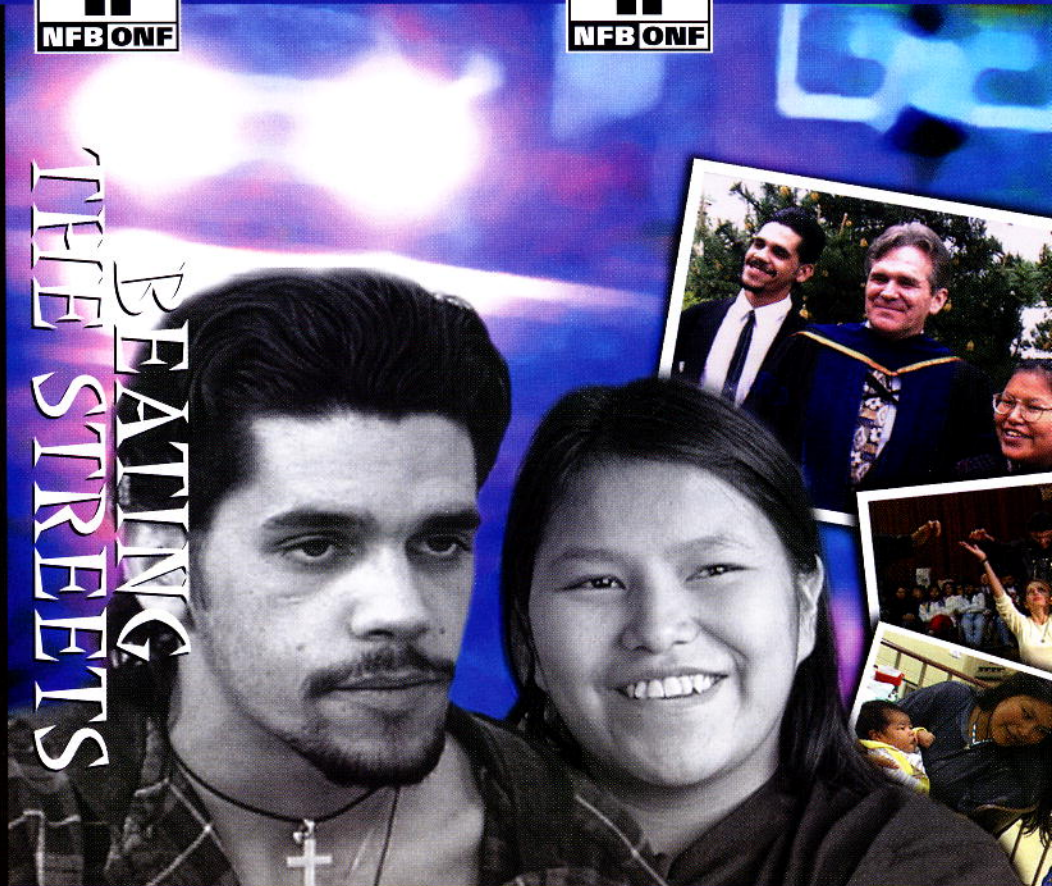
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VHS

C9198 025

BEATING THE STREETS



# BEATING THE STREETS

"Provides insight into the terrifying reality of these kids and then sends a message of hope."

—Edmonton Sun

**Beating the Streets** invites you to share the experiences and insights of Marilyn Brighteyes and Lance Marty, two Aboriginal teenagers who are members of the Inner City Drama Association in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

### **Background: History of The Inner City Drama Association (ICDA)**

1986: Joe Cloutier creates ICDA, and offers drama programs to children aged 6 to 11 to develop self-confidence and promote self-expression.

1988: ICDA begins offering popular theatre programs in schools and community halls to adolescents aged 12 to 17. Marilyn Brighteyes joins the Boyle Street teen program, which uses drama to address issues such as homelessness, substance abuse, violence, racism and other problems that block the development of inner city youth.

1990: Lance Marty joins ICDA and the teen participants begin performing plays for the community. These performances are followed by a discussion between actors and audience. This process gives the young people valuable insight, the confidence to deal with their problems and the opportunity to influence others. After using theatre to understand the issues affecting them, many of the youths begin taking responsibility for — and giving new direction to — their lives.

1991: ICDA rents a large house in the city's core to provide a safe place for the homeless youths who take part in the drama program. Several young people in the house want to return to school but some, like Lance Marty, ask to study full-time with ICDA leader Joe Cloutier and other teachers.

1992: ICDA changes its name to Inner City Youth Development Association, to reflect the organization's expanding mandate.

1993: Inner City High is established as an academic and arts-based alternative to the traditional school setting. Students are encouraged to leave behind the destructive isolation of street life and adopt the values of trust, respect, cooperation and non-violence. Each school day begins and ends with a circle — a forum where these positive values are reinforced, and where students express their opinions and participate in the operation of the school. Marilyn Brighteyes and each of the other students take turns being the facilitator who leads the circle.

1996: Lance Marty is among the first group of students to graduate from Inner City High School and in 1997 he registers in the Native studies program at the University of Alberta.

*This information is drawn from the Inner City Youth Development Association Web site ([www.innercityyouth.org](http://www.innercityyouth.org)).*

**Director:**  
Lorna Thomas

**Narration  
Written by:**  
David Cunningham  
Lawrence Herzog  
Lorna Thomas

**Narrator:**  
Tom Jackson

**Editor:**  
David Cunningham

**Director of  
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**Location Sound:**  
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Garrel Clark  
Rick Gustavsen

**Original Music:**  
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Colin Linden

**Producers:**  
Lorna Thomas  
Jerry Krepekevich  
(NFB)

**Executive  
Producer**  
Graydon McCrea  
(NFB)

**Order number:**  
C9198 025

48 minutes



### **Discussion Guide**

#### Pre-screening discussion points

1. Brainstorm what participants know about life in the inner city.
2. Discuss the impact that hunger, poverty, violence, crime and neglect can have on children.
3. Give information about residential schools and why they were created.

#### Post-screening questions

##### *Aboriginal themes*

1. How do you feel the same/different as the characters in the film?
2. Has racism affected Marilyn and Lance, and if so, how? (e.g. self-esteem, schooling, social-economic opportunities.)
3. What are the long-term effects of residential schools? (e.g. loss of Aboriginal culture, lack of parenting skills.)

##### *Crime Prevention through Social Development*

1. How do Joe and the Inner City Youth Development Association help kids stay out of trouble? Is this approach (i.e. using drama to process issues, involving communities in discussion, providing housing and appropriate schooling) a form of crime prevention?
2. Whose responsibility is it to help at-risk youth (e.g. citizens, communities, corporations, governments, the young people themselves), and what kind of support should be offered?
3. Marilyn's brother, Peter commits suicide in prison after a murder conviction. How might Peter have benefited had he received the same kind of support as Marilyn?

##### *Health Promotion/Popular Education/Popular Theatre*

1. How does drama help young people heal or come to terms with issues such as addiction and family violence?
2. What is unique about the way Inner City High operates? (e.g. empowerment of students; teaching values of trust, respect, co-operation, non-violence.)
3. How did this video affect you or change you? Did it make you want to take any action? If so, what?

### **Related Videos from the NFB**

**Turning Away** Gritty look at the lives of two 25-year-olds living on the streets of Toronto. "Eloquent" says the *Toronto Star* (1998, 60 minutes, order number C9198 006).

**Silence and Storm** Portrait of an unusual summer camp offering a safe haven and a chance to heal for kids whose lives have been scarred by abuse and neglect. (1995, 52 minutes, order number C9195 066).