

# NO ADDRESS

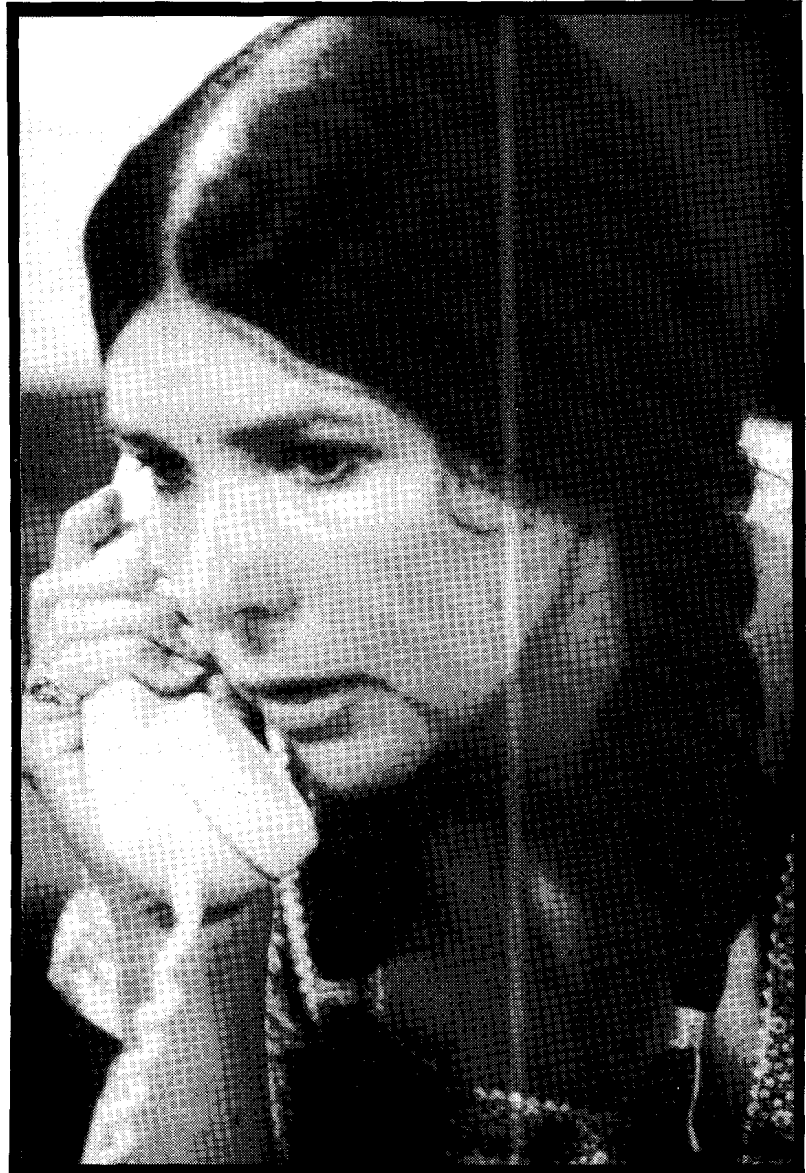
## ALANIS OBOMSAWIN

Alanis Obomsawin's recent film, *No Address* [described on p. 166], premiered in Montreal in November 1988. Produced and distributed by the National Film Board of Canada, it marks more than two decades of work with the NFB, which began shortly after two producers there saw a 1965 CBC documentary on Obomsawin called *Alanis*. Since then she has made several NFB films, including *Christmas at Moose Factory* (1971); *Mother of Many Children* (1977); *Amisk* (1977); *Incident at Restigouche* (1984); *Richard Cardinal: Cry from a Diary of a Metis Child* (1986); and *Poundmaker's Lodge—A Healing Place* (1987).

Alanis, an Abenaki, spent the first 9 years of her life on the Odanak reserve, 100 km. northeast of Montreal, prior to moving with her parents to Trois-Rivières. For the past 21 years, she has lived in the same downtown Montreal apartment, which she shares with her 19 year-old daughter Kisos.

Alanis' creativity extends to an active performing career, which began 30 years ago with a singing appearance at a concert in New York City. She went on to tour extensively, do children's concerts, appear frequently on *Sesame Street*, and write songs. She recently started her own music production company, Wawa Productions, and produced her first album. *Bush Lady* features two traditional Abenaki songs, as well as her own compositions. Future plans for the Wawa label include producing albums for other Native performers.

Recently she has been actively engaged in fundraising for a shelter for homeless Native women in Montreal.



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Written and directed by Alanis Obomsawin. Produced and distributed by the National Film Board of Canada, 1988.



In the spring of 1988, the official estimate for the number of homeless in Montreal stood at 12,000. *No Address* focuses on this swelling population.

Some of these young people leave troubled communities; others leave because their families have already scattered. Eventually the young people drift into cities such as Montreal, beckoned by the glamour of city life,

and the vague hope of finding roots.

Their high hopes are soon shattered. Whatever money they have soon runs out. To apply for welfare, they need a permanent address. Those who manage to make the welfare rolls soon find that the monthly \$188.00 for people under 30 is not enough to pay for a room, let alone food. They sleep where they can: outdoors, in lobbies, in

condemned buildings, occasionally at shelters or with friends.

Jobs are hard to find, and difficult to keep when one has neither slept nor eaten well. Many of the young women begin to solicit in order to survive in their new environment. Men beg for change on the streets; some hope to be picked up by the police just to have a place to stay. A cycle of depression, boredom, and despair sets in, sometimes broken by a temporary escape via alcohol or drugs.

*No Address* describes three organizations that are helping the homeless of Montreal. La Mission Colombe sends out a bus every night to pick up the homeless, and provides a meal. At the Montreal Native Friendship Center, the staff assist young Native people in dealing with government agencies and handling complicated paper work. Here they find companionship, the bond of language, and guidance on nutrition, employment, and other major concerns. The third organization, called *Demier Recours*, provides a twenty-four hour referral service for the homeless, turning away no one.

This information film is a discussion starter on social issues facing our native populations — homelessness, the problems being experienced by young Native people, and existing efforts to help them.