



*RECKONING WITH THE  
WENDIGO*

Feature Documentary  
Pitch Document

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## LOGLINE

What is the Wendigo? According to Cree and other Indigenous nations, it is a human that becomes a dark spirit after consuming everything around it. And it is coming for us. How do we escape the reckoning? This documentary presents a warning and an opportunity: what will we choose?

## SYNOPSIS

Featuring Edmund Metatawabin—a residential school survivor who was the Chief of Fort Albany and recently received the Order of Canada—this timely feature documentary takes us to the birthplace of Canada's fur trade to explore the ironic and deadly problem of food insecurity that exists there today. The chaotic times we are experiencing now have been prophesied by many Indigenous communities; one legend in particular forewarns us about the dangers of consumption and greed: that of the Wendigo/Wiindigo/Witiko. In Cree and other Indigenous nations, the Wendigo is a human that turns into a dark, insatiable spirit after consuming everything around it—even its own children. This suspenseful/heartwrenching, yet intimate/heartwarming documentary offers a glimpse into the lives of Moose Cree people living in Canada's North, exploring the allegory of the Wendigo and consumption. Shocking footage reveals exploitation on levels that are unacceptable. In a region where outsiders are looked upon with suspicion, our team was fortunate to gain access to reservations in this region to talk to community members not only about the crises they are facing—but how they are getting out of them. This documentary is a must-see emotional ride for Canadians and people around the world and runs 55 minutes.



## THEME

This documentary begins on a suspenseful tone, with themes of colonialism, capitalism, Christian missionaries, trauma and racism progressing throughout. Towards the end of the documentary we move towards a strong theme of grassroots resilience and resistance.

## SOUND

Original score by Indigenous composer (possibly Polaris prize-winner Jeremy Dutcher) alongside high-quality sound engineering and production that moves the viewer through different emotions. We start with orchestral sounds of cello, bass, violin in the more suspenseful, climactic parts of the documentary in the beginning, and move towards traditional drumbeats mimicking the heart towards the end.

## KEY CHARACTERS

Edmund Metatawabin anchors our story through his version of the Wendigo and Hanaway story. Edmund Metatawabin was the chief of Fort Albany for 10 years. He is also a writer, whose 2014 memoir *Up Ghost River: A Chief's Journey Through the Turbulent Waters of Native History* was a shortlisted nominee for the Governor General's Award for English-language non-fiction at the 2014 Governor General's Awards and is currently nominated for the Order of Canada award.

Dr. Joseph LeBlanc - Director of Indigenous Affairs at Northern Ontario School of Medicine.

Dr. Kristin Burnett - Associate Professor in the Department of Indigenous Learning at Lakehead University, currently studying food sovereignty and colonialism in northern First Nations communities.

Dr. Travis Hay - Historian of medicine and settler colonialism: whiteness, masculinity, hunting, and diabetes at Lakehead University

Jay Monture - Economic Development Coordinator for Moose Cree First Nation

Paul Wesley is a respected community member, politician, social worker in Kashechewan.

Lisa Sutherland is a respected community member and organizer in Moose Factory.





**Danielle Khan Da Silva, Director**



**Crystal Sinclair, Producer**



**Carolynne Crawley, Producer**

Danielle Khan Da Silva is an internationally-acclaimed and award-winning photographer//writer/director, as well as a conservationist, scholar and activist with mixed ancestry derived from Central/South Asia, Europe and Micronesia. Danielle is most passionate about using storytelling to connect people to the earth and to each other. Danielle was the first female photographer/director to be an artist-in-residence at the Hermann & Audrey agency in Toronto; here she started her filmmaking career in the music video industry before transitioning to commercial advertising, and finally into short documentaries. Danielle is the creator and director of the Photographers Without Borders Series, a series of stand-alone or stand-together short films that each follow a talented and entertaining photographer working in the field with a grassroots cause somewhere in the world. Several of the films in the series have been screened at film festivals worldwide, and have earned several awards including the Los Angeles International Film Festival award for Best Documentary, and the Peoples' Choice Documentary Award and the Judges' Award at the Human Trafficking Awareness Film Festival. Danielle has worked with hundreds of NGOs in over 80 countries, and learned more than 6 languages including English, French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, some Swahili and Indonesian (she can also read and write in Arabic). Most recently she is the recipient of a Canadian Top 30 Under 30 Sustainability Leaders Award, and was listed as number 2 in Matador Network's Top 17 Female Photographers of 2017; she was also in their Top 5 Women Changing Media list; she was also nominated for the 2018 Muhammad Ali Humanitarian Award. One of her first major lectures was a TEDx talk called "Grassroots Narrative," and she has since gone on to do a second TEDx talk called "Connection is the Key to Conservation."

Crystal Sinclair is a Nehiyaw (Cree) Woman from Fisher River Cree Nation in Manitoba. Crystal received her Bachelor of Social Work Degree from Ryerson University. Crystal is an Indigenous Rights Activist with Idle No More Toronto, public speaker, hand drummer and artist. Crystal has roots in the Toronto Indigenous Activist and Indigenous Artist community. Crystal is a survivor from the impacts of the Indian Act and the Residential School System. One of her roles as an OPSEU Indigenous Circle member is to work with FoodShare Toronto who travels to four Northern Reserves: Attawapiskat, Kashechewan, Fort Albany and Moose Factory, assisting those communities with food distribution that are looking into setting up Northern Food Markets within those communities. She is also very involved with clean water campaigns and knows the impact of privatization on our water supply. Crystal is a recipient of OPSEU 2016 Human Rights and Equity Award.

Carolynne Crawley is a Mi'kmaq woman with both African and Celtic ancestry. She has more than 25 years working experience supporting children and youth as a Child & Youth Worker and as an Educator. During her career she recognized a connection between a child's diet and behaviour. This inspired her to return to school to study holistic nutrition. Since then Carolynne has been working with FoodShare Toronto for the past eight years. She has been involved with building school food gardens and developing curriculum linked workshops and educator trainings. She also facilitates a variety of wellness activities and team building sessions for staff to promote wellbeing within the workplace. Carolynne is passionate about reconnecting with the land and sharing her knowledge of traditional skills, which include foraging for wild foods and medicines, tracking, bird language and more. She considers herself a naturalist and she is a staff member, in Ontario, of the international Art of Mentoring community, 'a week long experience immersing participants in a living, learning culture of nature and self-awareness.' She hopes one day this ancient knowledge becomes mainstream once again. Carolynne is also a Forest Therapy Guide, Mentor, and a Trainer in training. She guides walks in city parks to create opportunities for people to slow down and to deepen their connection to the more than human world through all of their senses.