

July 17 - 19

2026



FIRST

A CELEBRATION OF INDIGENOUS FILM

July 17 - 19, 2026

Digital Guide





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General Info

Tickets are sold at the door 30 minutes before showtimes. Films sell out quickly, so purchase in advance at:

www.victoriafilmfestival.com

We are not able to take phone orders.

Tickets

Films: \$14.29 + GST

Talk: On Acting, Writing and Directing \$10 + GST

Please visit www.victoriafilmfestival.com/festival to book.



Tickets & passes are subject to GST, #883954026RT0001.

No exchanges. No refunds. Program subject to change.

Visa, Mastercard accepted.

To view unclassified films, the BC government requires everyone in attendance to be a member of a film society and over the age of 18. Membership is \$2.

The Vic Theatre is a 19+ venue unless otherwise noted

Venue Info

The Vic Theatre

808 Douglas St, Victoria, BC

For 32 years, the non-profit Victoria Film Festival has held events on the traditional lands of the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations. We acknowledge with respect the Lək̓ʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples whose relationship with the land continues to this day.





Film Index

- 01** Təm kʷaθ nan (Namesake)
- 02** Ni-Naadamaadiz: Red Power Rising
- 03** The Business of Fancydancing
- 04** A Cree Approach
- 05** Illustrated Legacies: Graveyard of the Pacific
- 06** Aki

July 17

Friday

The Vic Theatre
808 Douglas St, V8W 2B7, Victoria BC

07:00 pm **Təm kʷaθ nan (Namesake)**
Evan Adams | Eileen Francis | 76 mins | Canada / B.C. | 2026
👤 19+

👤 Filmmaker
expected to attend

July 18

Saturday

The Vic Theatre
808 Douglas St, V8W 2B7, Victoria BC

All Ages
Free Screening
12:30 pm **Ni-Naadamaadiz:
Red Power Rising**
Shane Belcourt | 90 mins | Canada | 2025 🎧

04:15 pm **The Business of Fancydancing**
Sherman Alexie | 103 mins | USA | 2002 🎧 19+

07:00 pm **A Cree Approach**
Tristin Greyeyes | 75 mins | Canada / B.C. | 2026 🎧 19+

The Vic Theatre
808 Douglas St, V8W 2B7, Victoria BC

3:00 pm
On Acting, Writing and Directing
Award-winning writer and filmmaker Sherman Alexie joins actor, director, and physician Evan Adams for an engaging conversation about storytelling and filmmaking.
Moderator: Barbara Todd Hager

 Sherman Alexie
Writer / Director

 Evan Adams
Actor / Director

July 19

Sunday

The Vic Theatre
808 Douglas St, V8W 2B7, Victoria BC

03:00 pm **Illustrated Legacies:
Graveyard of the Pacific**
Tanner Zurkoski | 70 mins | Canada / B.C. | 2026 🎧 19+

05:15 pm **Aki**
Darlene Naponse | 85 mins | Canada | 2025 19+

The Vic Theatre
808 Douglas St, V8W 2B7, Victoria BC

Free Talk

1:00 pm
Producing 101
Every kind of screen media - short videos for Youtube, feature films and television and webseries - has one thing in common. They all need a producer to make them happen.

 Barbara Todd Hager
Director / Producer



Partners

Premier



VICTORIA FOUNDATION



Supporting



Venue



Media



Welcome to F1RST: A Celebration Of Indigenous Films

The Team Behind the Scenes

Festival Team

Festival Director: Kathy Kay

General Manager: Guillermo Rossi

Program Manager: Mark Hoyne

Operations & Development Coordinator: Tom Bush

Development & Volunteer Coordinator: Nina Yang

Community Engagement: Alejandro Lema Sanchez

Communications & Marketing Coordinator: Robin Wark

Vic Theatre Manager: Kiana Karimkhani

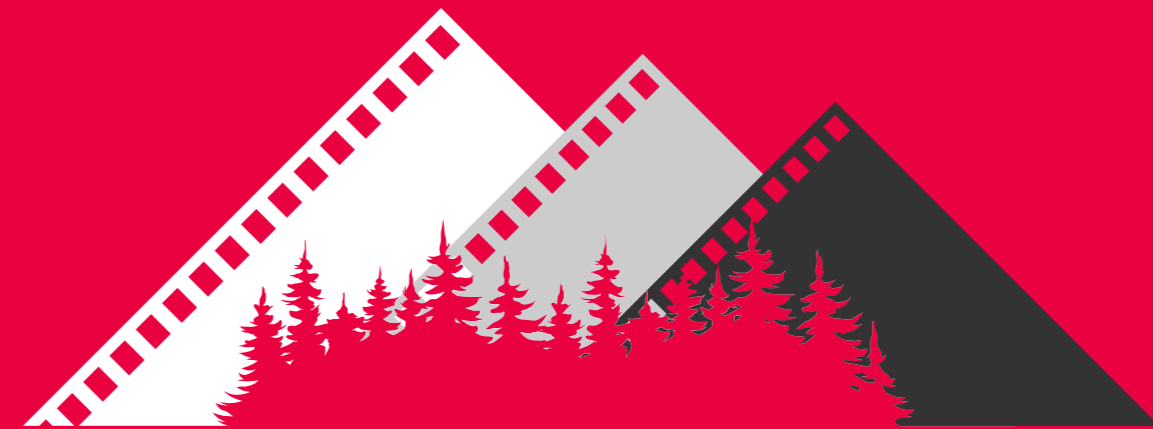
Programmer: Akira Iahtail

Board of Directors

President: Dan McDonagh

Vice President: Ruby Della Siega

Treasurer & Secretary: Joel Cave



F 1 R S T

A CELEBRATION OF INDIGENOUS FILM

Opening Film

Təm kʷaθ nan (Namesake)

Evan Adams | Eileen Francis | 76 mins | Canada / B.C. | 2026
English & ʔayʔajuθəm

The Vic Theatre | July 17 at 7:00 pm

 Filmmaker
expected to attend

Selected for the 2026 Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival, this documentary explores the importance of place names and their reclamation with the Tla'amin Nation in British Columbia. Co-directed by ʔesla Dr. Evan Adams (*Smoke Signals*, 1998) & tagəm Eileen Francis (*Cultural Consultant*, *Bones of Crow*, 2022). The film begins after May 2021, when the Tla'amin Nation asked the city council of Powell River to change its name. Originally named after Israel Wood Powell—an instrumental part of the implementation of Residential Schools and the Potlatch ban, as well as removing Tla'amin from its home at tiskwət—the name carries a history of harm. Told over the Tla'amin seasonal cycle, we learn of the over 12,000 years of Tla'amin continuous presence in the area and their naming traditions. The ongoing conversation between the Nation, the city and its inhabitants is told through Tla'amin oral storytelling, sit-down interviews, and footage of heated community meetings. The film shares how views and commitments to reconciliation waver when fears of losing identity, belonging, and family history are brought to the forefront. The goal is not to erase history, but to build a new future together through reflection, resistance, and allyship.

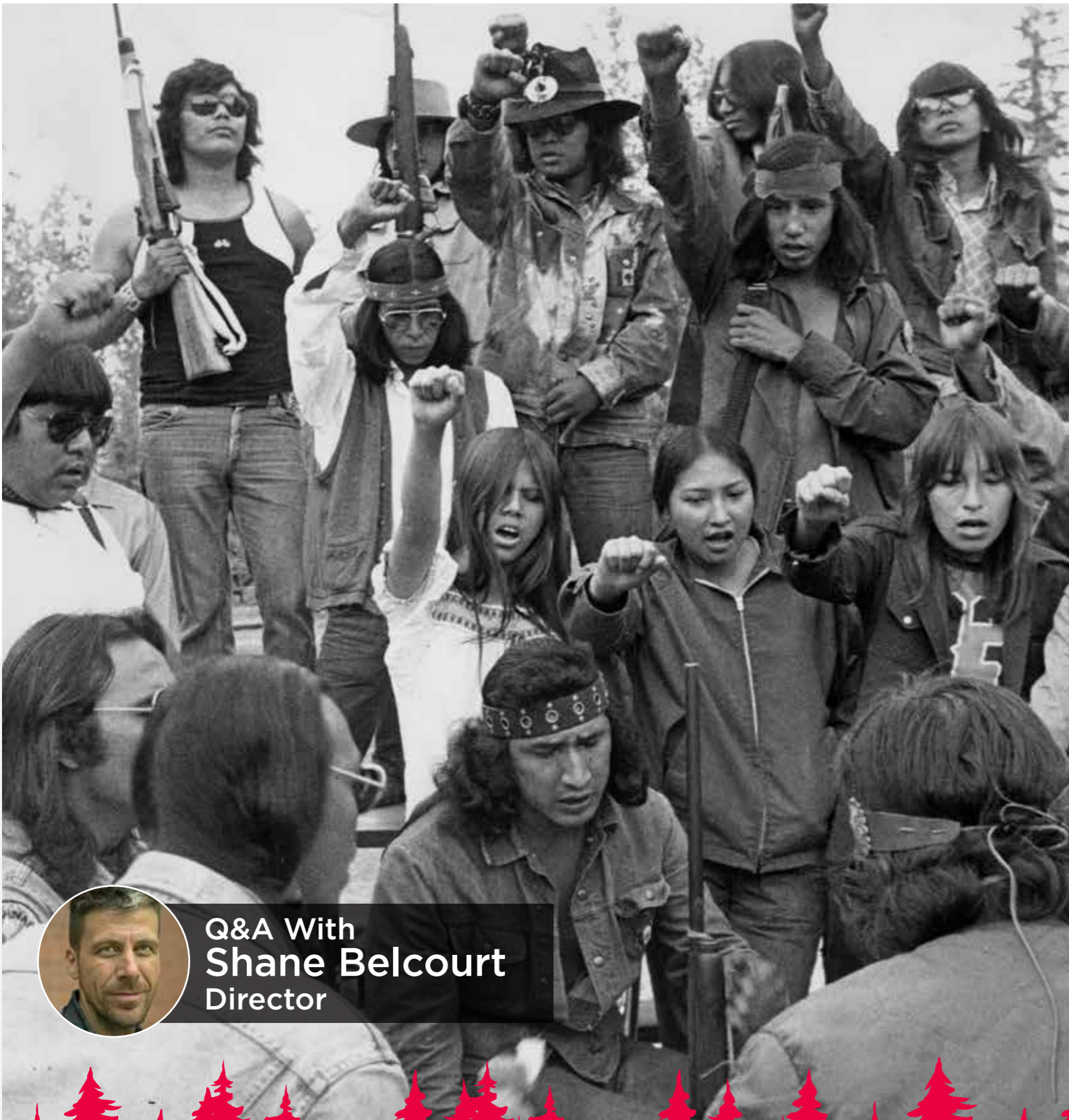
Q&A With
Eileen Francis
Director

Q&A With
Evan Adams
Director

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WATCH TRAILER

19+



Ni-Naadamaadiz: Red Power Rising

Shane Belcourt | 90 mins | Canada | 2025
English & Anishinaabemowin

The Vic Theatre | July 18 at 12:30 pm **ALL AGES | PG**

Filmmaker
expected
to attend

Free of charge but you must register online

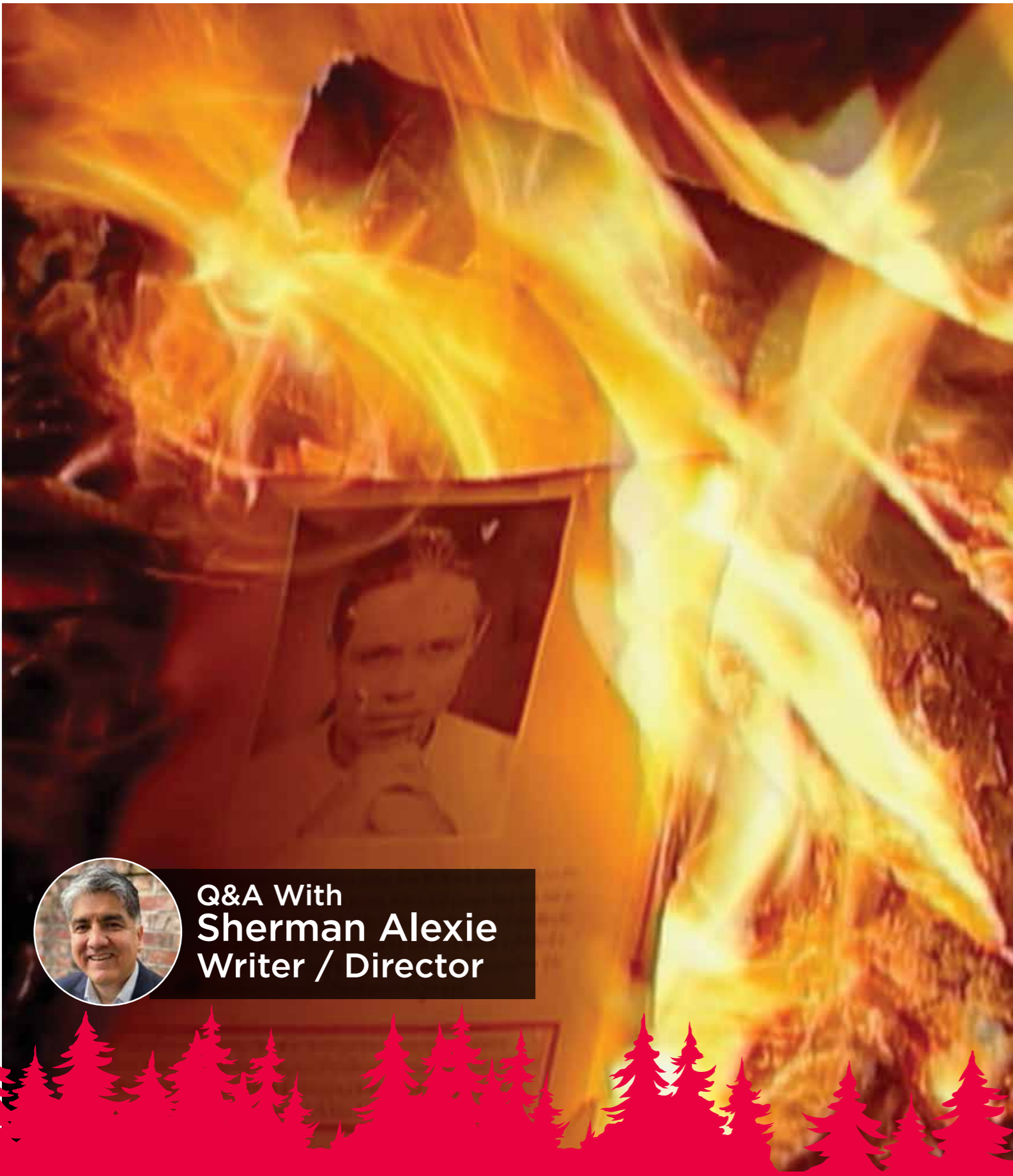
The Red Power movement emerged in the 1960s in the United States to push Indigenous resistance to the forefront in order to raise awareness for Indigenous Peoples' rights and identities, but the movement also took place in Canada. Métis filmmaker Shane Belcourt shares a little-known story of the Red Power movement in Canada. *Ni-Naadamaadiz: Red Power Rising* premiered at TIFF 2025, focusing on the 1974 38-day Indigenous youth-led land reclamation in Anicinabe Park of Kenora, Ontario. The documentary focuses on Louie Cameron, the leader of the Ojibway Warriors Society, who fronted the reclamation. The past and present are connected through Cameron's son, Tyler Cameron, who shares his father's unpublished manuscript, which details the events that took place. These stories raise awareness about illegal land purchases, poor housing conditions, and the failures of the Canadian Federal Government and the Department of Indian Affairs but also connect touching moments between a deceased father and his son, who carries his values and dreams today. Despite there only being eight minutes of footage from the occupation, Belcourt creates a gripping story using rare archival footage, personal letters, and interviews from those who took part in the 38-day standoff to tell a story of Indigenous resilience and power that grew from the systemic racism and ongoing mistreatment of Indigenous Peoples. The documentary was co-written and produced by acclaimed author and journalist Tanya Talaga (*The Knowing*) and includes co-written music from JUNO Award-winning musician Tom Wilson and Talaga.



Q&A With
Shane Belcourt
Director

REGISTER

WATCH TRAILER



Q&A With
Sherman Alexie
Writer / Director

The Business of Fancydancing

Sherman Alexie | 103 mins | USA | 2002

English

The Vic Theatre | July 18 at 4:15 pm



Filmmaker
expected to attend

Is Seymour (Evan Adams, *Kayak to Klemtu*, 2017) fighting a war to prove his tribe is still here - or exploiting his culture, as others have, by taking their stories?

Celebrate this remastered version 24 years later, with director Sherman Alexie in attendance. The film, which played at the 2002 Victoria Film Festival, marked Alexie's directorial debut and still resonates today, rich in depth and unafraid to defy a strict narrative. Seymour and Aristotle grow up together on the Spokane Reservation, but their paths diverge after graduation. While Seymour flourishes at university, Aristotle quickly falters, returning home to the safety and bitterness of low expectations.

Seymour finds support in Agnes (Michelle St. John, *Where the Spirit Lives*, 1989) until, near the end of college when he realizes he is gay. From there, his life opens up: he becomes one of the country's most celebrated poets, dining with the President and receiving widespread acclaim. Threaded throughout is Mouse, a gifted violinist who remains on the 'rez.' Mouse resents that his stories were taken for Seymour's book *All My Relations* and, believing himself already dead, asks Aristotle to sing his memorial song.

Seymour stays away for a decade until news of Mouse's overdose death draws him back. What follows is a reluctant reckoning with his past, his choices, and the ghosts that linger. Haunted by Mouse, Agnes, and his own success, Seymour tries to come to terms with his ghosts, and with the question - to reflect a tragic culture must you stay and live a tragic life?

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WATCH TRAILER

19+



Q&A With
Tristin Greyeyes
Director

A Cree Approach

Tristin Greyeyes | 75 mins | Canada / B.C. | 2026

English & Cree

The Vic Theatre | July 18 at 7:00 pm



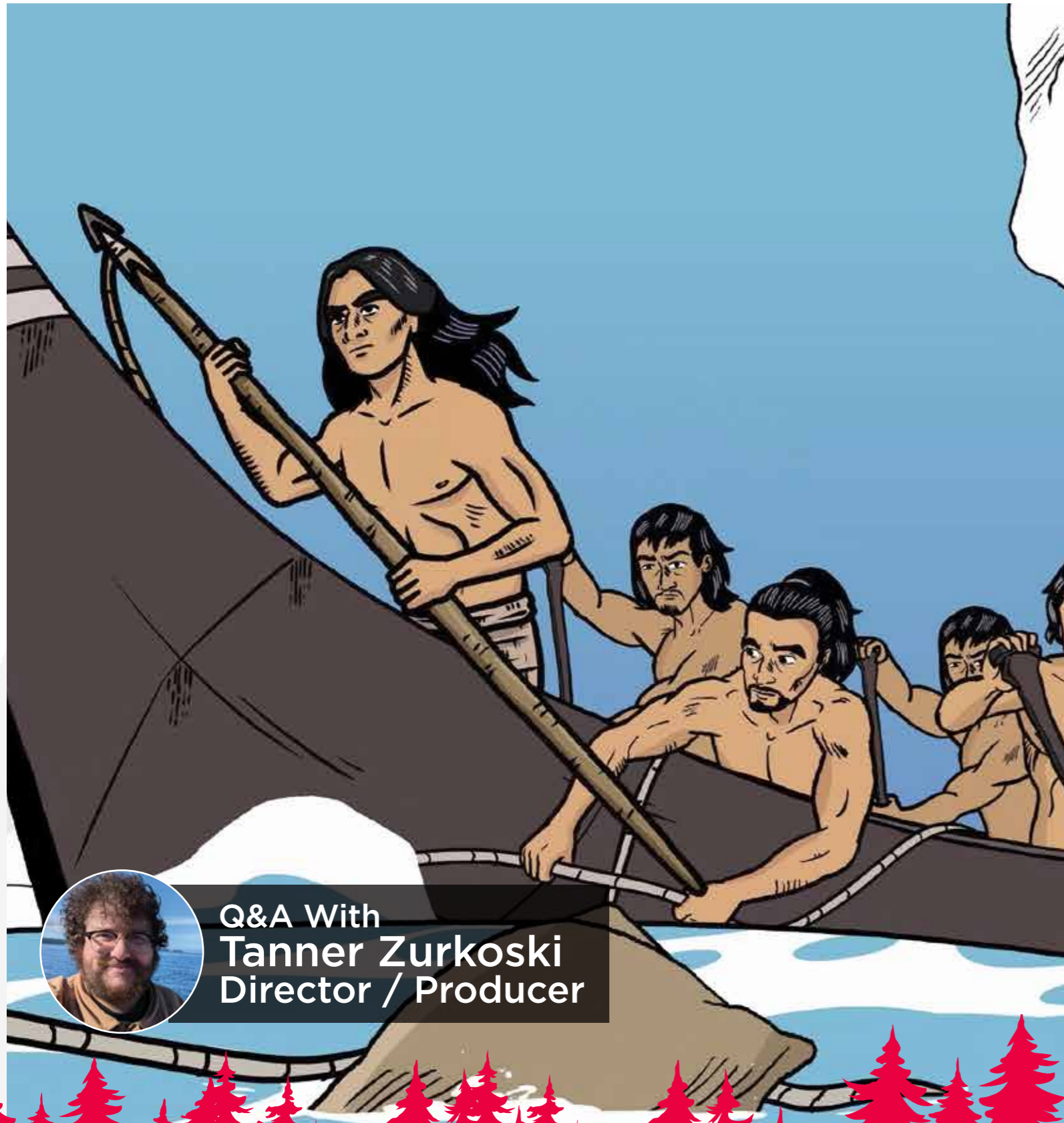
Filmmaker
expected to attend

The foundation of culture and identity is language, which holds stories, songs, histories, and connections, but because of harmful assimilatory policies like the Indian Act, many Indigenous Peoples across Canada lost their languages. Director Tristin Greyeyes (Muskeg Lake Cree Nation), searches to understand why *nêhiyawêwin* (the Plains Cree language) is not her first language through uncovering the story of her grandma, Freda Ahenakew, and her life's work. Recently, *A Cree Approach* won Best Feature Film at the 2026 Gender Equity in Media Festival (GEMFest) and Best BC Feature Film at the 2026 Sundar Prize Film Festival. Greyeyes shares the life of Freda, a *nêhiyaw* (Cree) woman, who did tremendous work in *nêhiyawêwin* revitalization, was eventually named to the Order of Canada in 1998. Freda's story inspires Tristin to reclaim her identity through learning the language, connecting with her family, and powwow dancing. Despite attending residential school and being subjected to harmful assimilative policies, Freda grew up with her culture and surrounded by fluent Cree speakers, eventually dedicating her life to saving *nêhiyawêwin* while providing for her 12 children. This beautiful, personal documentary is a call for action for the reclamation of language, identity, and culture in Indigenous communities while honouring the trailblazers of the past, like Freda.

BUY TICKETS

WATCH TRAILER

19+



Illustrated Legacies: Graveyard of the Pacific

Tanner Zurkoski | 70 mins | Canada / B.C. | 2026

English

The Vic Theatre | July 19 at 3:00 pm

 Filmmaker expected to attend

Port Alberni-based Cree-Métis filmmaker Tanner Zurkoski directs this stunning documentary-animation hybrid that shares coastal histories from the shores of Vancouver Island and northern Washington using oral traditions, archival material, and memories of First Nations communities. Recently having its world premiere at the 2026 DOXA Film Festival, *Illustrated Legacies* began as a selected work of the 2023 Indigenous Screen Summit Pitch Forum at the Banff World Media Festival. From there, Zurkoski spent three years developing the project into what it is today. This film questions the notions of pre-history to raise awareness that Indigenous Peoples have always had their own history. Using the different eras of shipwrecks, Zurkoski shares early settler encounters and conflicts. Centered on the sinking of the Kingfisher trading vessel in 1864 between the British Royal Navy and the Ahousaht First Nation, the documentary unpacks Indigenous governance systems, regional alliances, and whaling traditions. The stories bring survival, resistance, and cultural renewal to the forefront while shining a light on how colonial disruption caused an epidemic that harmed Indigenous ways of being. Zurkoski combines hand-drawn animated historical re-creations by Indigenous artists in combination with oral history from Nuu-Chah-Nulth communities that show moments of hostilities and trickery with European settlers.



Q&A With
Tanner Zurkoski
Director / Producer

BUY TICKETS

WATCH TRAILER

19+



Aki

Darlene Naponse | 85 mins | Canada | 2025

Anishinaabemowin

The Vic Theatre | July 19 at 5:15 pm

Aki, Anishinaabemowin for “land” or “earth,” is set in Atikameksheng Anishnawbek (formerly known as Whitefish Lake), the home community of director Darlene Naponse. The highly acclaimed follow-up to her previous projects, *Falls Around Her* (TIFF 2018) and *Stellar* (TIFF 2022, VFF 2023), premiered at TIFF 2025. This visual avant-garde documentary follows the seasons of her community in Anishinabemowin and captures the soundscapes, beauty, and all of the inhabitants of Mother Earth from her community’s perspective. Naponse’s motivation is to share the story of her community through transcending fine art and documentary as the film has no dialogue and urges the viewer to slow down and experience community by coming together and being on the land. Kinship is captured through humans and animals, juxtaposed with visuals of industrial entities, creating a sense of empathy for the land, and exposing the harsh reality of resource extraction and colonialism. This non-verbal film is filled with the sounds of Mother Earth and accompanied by a beautiful soundtrack composed by Juno Award-nominated cellist Cris Derksen (North Tall Cree). Naponse uses time-lapse, split screens, underwater, and drone footage to bring the beauty of her community to the big screen. It is a meditative, immersive film that resists colonial narratives and invites us into the lives and land-based practices of the people of Atikameksheng Anishnawbek as they go through each season of life. This film is created from Naponse’s home, territory, and memories; it is not a film about her community, but it is a film made with her community.

BUY TICKETS

19+



Filmmaker Talks

July 18 & 19

 **The Vic Theatre**
808 Douglas St, V8W 2B7, Victoria, BC

On Acting, Writing and Directing talk: \$10 + GST
Please visit www.victoriafilmfestival.com/festival to book.

Buy Tickets

Producing 101 Talk is free of charge but you must register.
Limited capacity.

Register Here

July 18 Saturday

3:00 pm

On Acting, Writing and Directing

With Sherman Alexie & Evan Adams
Moderator: Barbara Todd Hager

 **The Vic Theatre**
808 Douglas St, V8W 2B7, Victoria BC

Award-winning writer and filmmaker Sherman Alexie joins actor, director, and physician Evan Adams for an engaging conversation about storytelling and filmmaking. From ground-breaking works like *Smoke Signals*, *The Business of Fancydancing* and *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* to documentary filmmaking and contemporary Indigenous perspectives, this session explores the intersections of art, identity, and community. Moderated by local filmmaker Barbara Todd Hager.

Buy Tickets



Sherman Alexie
Writer / Director

Sherman Alexie is a poet, novelist, essayist and filmmaker. He's the author of *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, a novel with over 3 million copies sold, and *You Don't Have to Say You Love Me: A Memoir*. He's the writer and co-producer of the beloved classic, *Smoke Signals*, and the writer and director of *The Business of Fancydancing*. He's an enrolled member of the Spokane Tribe of Indians and lives with his wife and sons in Seattle.



Evan Adams
Actor / Director

Actor Evan Adams is widely known for *Smoke Signals*, *Reservation Dogs*, and *Bones of Crows*. Evan previously co-directed the documentary *Kla Ah Men: As Far Back as the Story Goes* about the Tla'amin Treaty process. In *Namesake*, this year's opening film, he helps guide viewers through history, memory, and present-day conversation. He currently serves with the First Nations Health Authority and the National Circle for Indigenous Medical Education.

July 19 Sunday

1:00 pm Free talk. Registration Required

Producing 101

 **The Vic Theatre**
808 Douglas St, V8W 2B7, Victoria BC

Every kind of screen media - short videos for youtube, feature films and television and webseries - has one thing in common. They all need a producer to make them happen. Veteran producer Barbara Todd Hager (Cree/Metis) will show you how to kickstart your story idea and go through the steps it takes to keep control of the copyright, raise funding, find a broadcaster and distributor, and manage the production from idea to delivery.

[Register Here](#)



Barbara Todd Hager
Director / Producer

Barbara Todd Hager (Métis/Cree) is a documentary producer, director and writer. She is the creator of six feature documentaries (*Tomson Highway: Permanent Astonishment*, *Forbidden Music*, *Motown High*, *Leaving Beringia*, *Bella Coola to Berlin* and *Truth Dance & Reconciliation*), and four television series including *1491: The Untold Story of the Americas Before Columbus*, *Down2Earth*, and *All Our Relations II* that represent more than 150 episodes. Barbara is a mentor for TELUS STORYHIVE and the Whistler Film Festival's Indigenous Film Fellowship program. She has served on the board of directors for the Whistler Film Festival, Victoria Film Festival, DOC Canada, and the Alliance of Aboriginal Media Professionals.

Special Guests



Sherman Alexie
Writer / Director

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Director / Producer

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Shane Belcourt
Director

Shane Belcourt is a Métis filmmaker whose debut feature film, *Tkaronto* (the original Kanien'kéhaka/Mohawk term for Toronto), debuted at the imagineNative festival in 2007. His work frequently addresses Indigenous themes and his director credits include multiple episodes of the TV series *Urban Native Girl*; the feature film *Red Rover*; and the documentary *Kaha:wi: The Cycle of Life*, featuring Mohawk performer Tekaronhiákhwa Santee Smith. Belcourt was a TIFF Talent Lab participant, an IFC Mentorship Award recipient, and a Filmmaker in Residence at the Winnipeg Film Group. His father, Tony Belcourt, was the founding President of the Métis Nation of Ontario.



Tanner Zurkoski

Director / Producer

A third-generation Indigenous media maker from Prince Rupert, Tanner grew up immersed in storytelling through his mother, documentary filmmaker Nitanis Desjarlais, and his kokum Cleo Reece, a founder of one of Canada's first Indigenous film festivals. Tanner studied film at York University and went on to write, direct, and produce the award-winning comedy series *The Village Green for Canal+*. His Crave short film *Whale*, supported by the Harold Greenberg Fund, Bell Media, and Netflix through the CFC, focuses on language revitalization and cultural resurgence. Tanner continues to champion authentic Indigenous storytelling through projects like his current hybrid animated documentary on Nuu-Chah-Nulth history.



Eileen Francis

Director

Eileen Francis is the filmmaker and IT technician for the Tla'amin Nation, documenting stories for future generations. A graduate of Capilano University's Indigenous Independent Digital Filmmaking program and the Powell River Digital Film School, she has worked with APTN and served as cultural consultant on *Bones of Crows*. Her short film *tisk^wat* screened at the 2024 qathet International Film Festival. Eileen's work is guided by a lifelong commitment to carrying forward the storytelling traditions of her family's matriarchs.



Tristin Greyeyes

Director

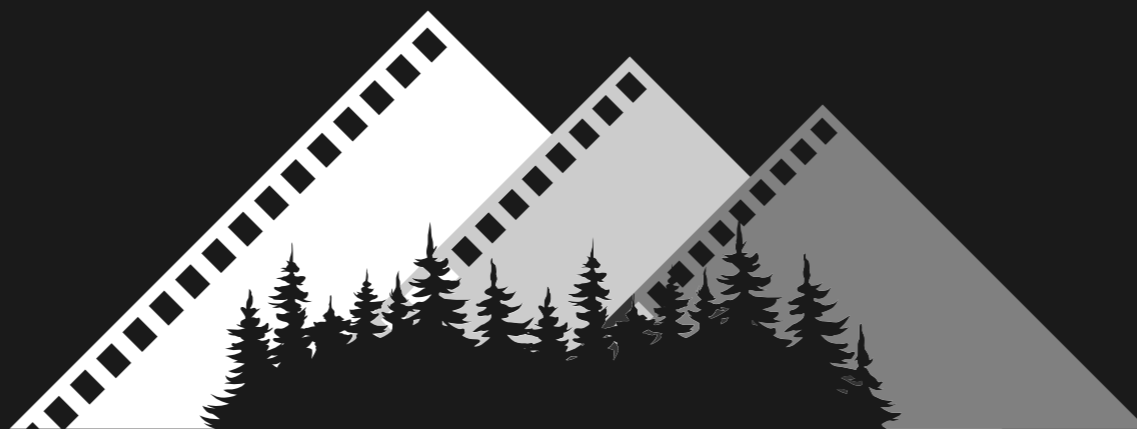
Tristin Greyeyes is a Two-Spirit nēhiyaw, ojibway proud mom of two. She's a registered member of the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation. A film curator and a visual storyteller, Tristin has produced several short films while receiving her Bachelor's Degree in Motion Picture Arts, 2021. She has very recently completed her first feature documentary, *A Cree Approach*, 2025. Tristin also founded, *Ācimowin Film Festival*; it currently stands as the only Indigenous film festival in Saskatchewan. Tristin is determined to empower Indigenous voices across Turtle Island through the art of film but especially on Treaty 6 Territory, her homelands.



Akira Lahtail

Programmer

Akira Lahtail is a film programmer from amiskwaciwâskahikan, also known as Edmonton, Alberta. On her mother's side, she is nēhiyaw and Métis, from Bigstone Cree Nation. On her father's side, she is Swiss-German and mushkegowuk, and a member of Attawapiskat First Nation located in Treaty 9 territory. She recently finished her Bachelor's of Art in Indigenous Studies at Simon Fraser University, where she began her Indigenous film programming journey with the Skoden Indigenous Film Festival and the Vancouver Latin American Film Festival. Now, she is a curator at The Cinematheque for 'Our Stories to Tell', a monthly series dedicated to the new wave of Indigenous storytelling, prioritizing visual sovereignty in cinema.



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