

TELLING OUR STORY

11 FIRST PEOPLES, 11 CULTURES, 11 LANGUAGES: A multi-millennial presence whose story remains to be told.

A magnificent, moving, and luminous four-part docu-series on Canada's Indigenous Peoples produced, directed, edited, and set to music by Indigenous artists and artisans.

“The time has come to speak out and tell our story, to decolonize history and to celebrate the beauty of our cultures.” In *Telling Our Story*, 11 First Peoples tell us who they are, in their own way and from their own points of view.

- **SUMMARY:**

For the first time on screen, the 11 First Peoples in Quebec Canada,— the Abenaki, Anishnabe, Atikamekw, Cree of Eeyou Istchee, Innu, Inuit, Mi'gmaq, Kanyen'kehà:ka (Mohawk), Naskapi, Wendat and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) — tell us who they are, in their own way and from their own points of view.

They share their worldview, their connection to the land, their spirituality, their values, their history going back thousands of years, their wounds, their struggles, their victories and their hopes. Their stories give depth to our great collective narrative, help decolonize history and minds, and honour the Ancestors and Mother Earth.

Telling Our Story is an essential four-part series that celebrates their resistance, resilience and revival.



- **SYNOPSIS:**

For the first time on screen, 11 First Peoples, whose homelands host Quebec, Labrador, New Brunswick, Ontario, and beyond, are telling us their story. Each in turn, Abenaki, Anishinaabe, Atikamekw, Cree of Eeyou Istchee, Innu, Inuit, Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk), Mi'kmaq, Naskapi, Wendat and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) tell us who they are, in their own way and from their point of view: their worldview, their connection to the Land, their values, their spirituality, their stories that go back thousands of years, their wounds, their struggles, their victories, and their hopes. They give depth to our great collective narrative, decolonize History, and honor the Ancestors and Mother Earth.

11 First Peoples, 11 cultures, 11 languages. A history spanning thousands of years. Award-winning Abenaki director Kim O'Bomsawin (*Call Me Human*, *Quiet Killing*) and her team traveled 30,000 kilometers between September 2020 and May 2022 and visited thirty communities



and villages in the northeastern part of Canada. Over one hundred women and men of all generations took up the talking stick with humor, wisdom, and generosity, to speak to us in Indigenous languages, French, and English.

Others expressed themselves through dance, music, animation, and slam. Strikingly beautiful images pay tribute to the Land that is at the heart of their identities, beliefs, and knowledge.

“After centuries of colonial laws, treaties and measures aimed at assimilating us and ‘killing the Indian in every child,’ after having implemented The Indian Act, which was designed to put an end to the ‘Indian problem’ and which remains in effect today, after having dispossessed us of our Land by parking us on reserves, and stripping us of our language, our culture and our spirituality, by forcibly sending us to Christian boarding schools, **Telling Our Story is a celebration of our resistance, our resilience and our revival.**”

Kim O’Bomsawin, Director



● SHORT CREDIT LIST:

A four-part documentary series in 11 Indigenous languages, English, and French

Director: Kim O'Bomsawin

Executive Producer and Producer: Francine Allaire

Commissioned by: Radio-Canada and CBC

Production Company: Terre Innué

Available versions: 52 minute International English version; 44-minute English version; 52-minute French version

Narrator: Kaniehtiio Horn

Cast (in part): Jeremy Dutcher, Quentin Condo, Matthew & Danielle Mukash, Joséphine Bacon, Caroline Monnet, Eruoma Awashish, Barbara Diabo, Charlotte Gauthier-Nolett, Olivia Ikey Duncan, Carlos Kistabish, Edna Manitowabi, Brad Gros-Louis, Ivanie Aubin-Malo, Nathan Uniam and

The members of 30 communities of 11 First Peoples whose homelands make up Quebec, Labrador, New Brunswick, Ontario, Maine and beyond. Our deepest gratitude for the generosity of their words and trust in us to share their stories.

Screenwriters: Geneviève Albert, Alexandre Bacon, Mathieu Fournier, Guillaume Lonergan, Angie-Pepper Obomsawin, Kim O'Bomsawin

Head Research and Visual Archives: Nancy Marcotte,

Field Researchers: Ivanie Aubin-Malo, Eruoma Awashish, Alexandre Bacon, Jani Bellefleur-Kaltush, Luca Caruso-Moro, Brad Gros-Louis, Maurice J. Kistabish, Karine Lanoie-Brien, Réal Junior Leblanc, Ossie Michelin, Mathieu O'Bomsawin, Eric P. Thisdale

Director of photography: Hugo Gendron

Sound: Lynn Trepanier, Luc Raymond, Bernard Gariépy Strobl

Editors: Alexandre Iachance, Mélanie O'Bomsawin

Music: Hugo Perreault-Studio Grosse Roche & Florent Vollant, Kim Fontaine, Mathieu McKenzie, Studio Makusham

Illustrations: Eruoma Awashish, Saige Nalakwsis Mukash, Pasa Mangiok, aka PRIM.

Graphic Design: Sébastien Aubin

Motion Design and Animation: Étienne Deslières, DBcom Media

The series is made possible through the support of many partners, including Radio-Canada and CBC, the Canada Media Fund, the Québecor Fund, SODEC (Société de développement des entreprises culturelles), the Canada Council for the Arts, the Rogers Documentary Fund, the Société du Plan Nord, the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit, Off the Fence B.V. , the Québec tax credit and the Canadian Film or Video Production Tax Credit. Special thanks to our sponsors: Air Inuit, Quartz.Co, Musique Nomade, Pourvoiries Moisie-Nipissis et Haute Moisie.

Worldwide distribution by Off The Fence B.V.

To the loving memory of Réginald Vollant



● **EPISODIC SUMMARIES:**



Episode I: Territory

To understand who we are, you need to appreciate the special relationship we have with the land, a vast and immense territory that we shared amongst Nations. It is an intimate and powerful bond that we want to keep alive.

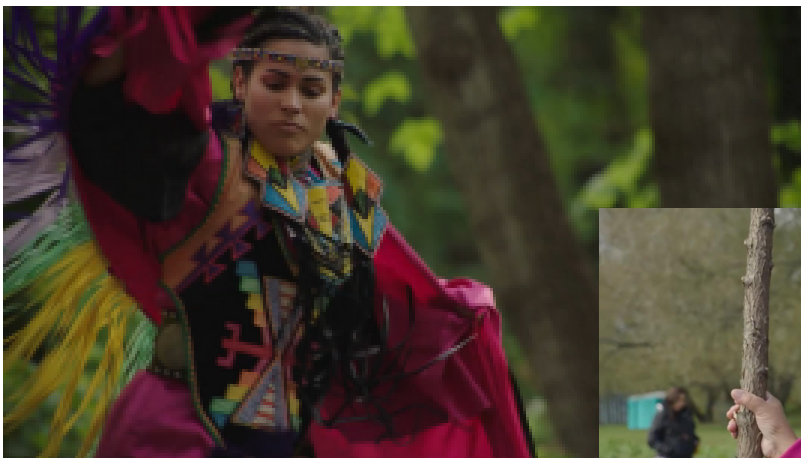
Let us tell you the story of the land — the beating heart of our identities, our beliefs and our traditions.



Episode 2: Identity

Our worldview is what defines us as First Peoples. It is shaped by our intimate relationship with the land and with our ancestors, our languages and our traditional knowledge.

To tell you our story, we need to show you the beauty of our languages and the ingenuity of our people that has been passed on for thousands of years through our oral tradition.



Episode 3: Spirituality

Despite attempts made by the government and the Church to ban our rituals and ceremonies, our spiritualities live on. The plants and animals that feed us are sacred. For millennia, powerful objects and dances have been used to connect to the Creator, animal spirits and everything around us.

Eleven First Peoples, one circular worldview, connected to all that is alive.



Episode 4: Rebuilding



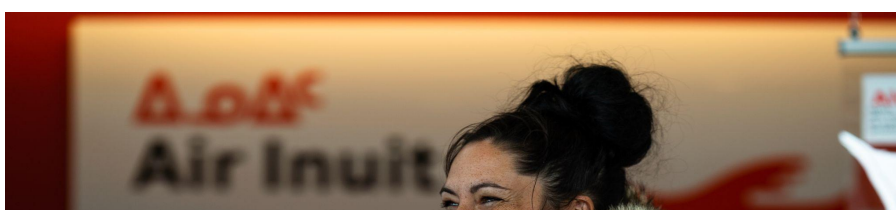
Before colonization, the 11 First Peoples had their own systems of governance in which women played a central role. The Indian Act stripped women of their power.

Today, for future generations, women are tackling universal issues including ecological stewardship, discrimination, governance and food sovereignty. This fight is critical.

Our philosophy is simple: make every political decision with a view to its impact on the next seven generations. This principle guided our ancestors and is why we are still here today to perpetuate it. Now, it will help us confront a global environmental crisis.



- **DIRECTOR'S WORD** By Kim O'Bomsawin



As an Indigenous

director, this series is an exceptional opportunity for me: to share with the world who we are, to participate in the decolonization of our history, and even to rewrite an inclusive, collective history. On a personal level, as an Abenaki, I was never able to learn the stories that we will tell you. I

did not get the opportunity to discover them growing up. So, this is a personal quest, as much as it is a professional quest. History is often referred to as something very distant. Our goal is to talk about History through a modern voice, to show it in a contemporary light. Indigenous youth represent our greatest strength, our hope for the future. There are a number of inspiring role models emerging from this new generation and I think we absolutely need to put them in the spotlight. Following this logic, these young people are at the very heart of the documentary series, the new generation that can establish a concrete link between the present and the past, between generations, between people of all origins.

Orality is an ancient communication system based on myths and legends. Storytelling is the cornerstone of First Nations education and culture. In our contemporary Western world, knowledge is objective. But among Indigenous people, oral tradition opens the door to a different understanding, with the knowledge that is organized and woven around individual and collective experiences. A knowledge that reflects our subjectivity and allows us to understand our environment, and to open up to others. This way of telling history did not make it into our textbooks.

Contrary to the classic Western narrative scheme, based on linear “introduction, events, conclusion, moral” models, the First Peoples tell their stories in a circular way, describing the past, living the present, and preserving the future. In the same way, we want to reflect on the cycle of life, resilience, and a way of freely navigating the past, present, and future. This way of telling stories is both the key and the door to the narrative thread of this documentary series. It is how **Telling Our Story** is built and structured, by freely moving between the past, present, and future.

In order to reflect our unconventional narrative scheme, each episode of **Telling Our Story** is built around key moments in our history, symbolic objects, used in both our culture and our way of life, that translate and highlight our worldview, as well as our founding myths and values. Throughout the stories we tell, we sometimes share this History with that of Quebecers and Canadians. While this History was initially based on interactions and interdependence, over the centuries, it evolved into a historical power struggle over land and over our identity.

We could not avoid the subject of the Indian Act. It inspired the apartheid system in South Africa, was designed to find a "final solution" to the Indian problem, and continues to wreak havoc in communities and on reserves. Add to this the residential school system, abolished in 1996; how did it destroy the social fabric, culture, spirituality, mental health, and intergenerational emotional bonds...? These are certainly two major tipping points in our history. But we also note how today, we are witnessing a true rebirth of Indigenous pride and power!

The tone is never moralizing but does not avoid the most difficult times in our history. With humor, backed by wit and insight, we are able to tackle the darkest moments. I see this series as a great mosaic, in which documentary moments intersect with more cinematic scenes that evoke our spirituality and worldview. The cinematography and musical score are modern and bold while remaining timeless and deeply rooted. We want this series to age well. In addition to motion design, as well as visual archives, 2D animation plays an important role in establishing the aesthetic signature.

We hope to offer the viewers an unforgettable experience that is both emotional and thought-provoking.

Furthermore, the series—and more broadly the major transmedia project, **Laissez-nous raconter/Telling Our Story**—is a real training and mentoring ground. Since the objective is to tell "our" story, it goes without saying that the team is made up of members of the First Peoples, in all key positions, from writing and directing, to technical teams in the field and post-production positions. This is a major challenge because especially in Quebec, the Indigenous workforce is still lacking. We have set out to build a substantial talent pool. Beginning with the field research stage, we trained 12 young Indigenous people who went on to conduct research in more than 30 communities. The experience turned out to be a huge success! Our strategy in this regard was to hire all those who already have the skills and the caliber to join this ambitious project. Then, in key positions for which we do not have qualified candidates, we have established a mentorship and companionship between an Indigenous person and a non-Indigenous professional who is already aware of Indigenous realities. It is important for us to see **Telling Our Story** as a "process". Because when it comes to this project, the "work process", ethics, and training are all just as important as the end result.

This series speaks to a broad audience: Indigenous people within the country, peoples across the world that were colonized and that are now looking to tell their own story, and all the descendants of the first colonizers, who are unaware of our history and with whom we wish to create a dialogue and start a new relationship and to all who care for Mother Earth.

Kim O'Bomsawin

Director and President, Terre Innué

● PRODUCTION NOTES



Abenaki filmmaker Kim O'Bomsawin and

her team, composed mostly of Indigenous artists and artisans, traveled more than 30,000 kilometers between September 2020 and May 2022 to create this series as an immense fresco that illuminates the past, present, and future. Whether by car, plane, seaplane, helicopter, train, Skidoo, canoe, ATV, or dog sled, the team visited some thirty communities and villages in the territories now known as Quebec, New Brunswick, Ontario, and Maine.

The Covid pandemic has had a significant disruptive impact on the series' production process. Communities were closed for months due to outbreaks and fear of contamination by visitors coming from the South. Indigenous communities already experience poor access to healthcare, lack of access to essential services and safe drinking water, and are facing much greater levels of overcrowded housing, homelessness, and incarceration. Many still had in mind the devastating effects of the 1918 Spanish Flu and the 1950s tuberculosis outbreaks on Inuit and Indigenous communities. Members of the production team and their children were also plagued by Covid slowing down the shooting and post-production schedule. The 78-day shoot finally ended in late May 2022 in Whapmagoostui on the Hudson Bay after Goose-break.

Telling Our Story unfolds in four one-hour thematic episodes: Territory, Identity, Spirituality, and Rebuilding. Like a relay, a hundred or so women and men of all generations, from the 11 First Peoples, spoke to us in Indigenous languages, in French, and in English, with humor, wisdom, and generosity. Others express themselves through dance, music, animation, and slam. Stunningly beautiful images pay tribute to the land that is at the heart of their identities, beliefs, and skills.

Produced by Francine Allaire for Terre Innué, the production of this series was accompanied by a Circle of Indigenous Advisors and knowledge carriers who guided the implementation of this project following Protocols respecting First Peoples' values and practices. The series required a vast research project led by veteran Nancy Marcotte (Fire of Love) and a dozen Indigenous researchers in some thirty communities of the 11 First Peoples. More than 200 hours of material inspired the team of writers, including Geneviève Albert, Alexandre Bacon, Mathieu Fournier, Guillaume Lonergan, Kim O'Bomsawin, and Pepper O'Bomsawin.



The narration of the French version is carried by poet, author, and host of decolonizing podcasts Innu of Mashteuiatsh, Marie-Andrée Gill. The narration of the English version is carried by Mohawk actress Kaniehtiio Horn of Kahnawake.

The rich soundtrack is two-fold: an original musical score by Studio Makusham based in the Innu community of Mani-utenam and the integration of more than thirty amazing musical excerpts by artists and groups of the 11 First Peoples. The series also showcases the talent of three Indigenous young women illustrators: Eruoma Awashish (Atikamekw), Saige Nalakwsis Mukash (Cree), and Pasa Mangiok, alias PRIM, (Inuk).

The television series is part of a large multi-faceted transmedia project. The first project of its kind to bring together Indigenous voices from the 11 First Peoples around a common goal, *Laissez-nous raconter/Telling Our Story* is available in various multiplatform formats: podcasts, radio specials, a website, an immersive dome film for the Montreal Planetarium (currently in production), exhibitions and educational guides, and this documentary series.

Numerous Band Councils and political and socio-cultural organizations from the 11 First Peoples gave their valuable support to the production of the series, which was also a mentoring and companionship ground for young Indigenous people new to the media world.



About Terre Innue

Terre Innue is an Indigenous production company founded by the late Réginald Vollant and Ian Boyd in 2010 in Mani-utenam with its head office in Wendake. Its shareholders are Indigenous: Alexandre Bacon, Kim O'Bomsawin, and Florent Vollant. Terre Innue produces documentaries and fiction for all media and platforms. Its objectives are to tell stories from an Indigenous point of view, to value the cultures and languages of the First Peoples, to promote the development of an Indigenous audiovisual industry, and to ensure the apprenticeship and professional training of the next generation of Indigenous people. Its productions in film, television, radio and digital media have been acclaimed by critics and audiences and have won awards in Canada and around the world.



About Off The Fence

Off the Fence (OTF) is a non-fiction content company with offices in Amsterdam, London, Bristol and Toronto, which has produced more than 700 hours of award-winning programming for broadcasters including History, the BBC, Channel 4, PBS, Discovery and National Geographic. The company, which develops, finances, produces and co-produces programming across the non-fiction spectrum, including natural history, science, travel and adventure, lifestyle, history, people and culture, crime and feature docs, was founded in 1994 by Ellen Windemuth. In 2019, it was acquired by ZDF Enterprises, the commercial arm of the German public broadcasters.

COMPLETE CAST LIST

ABENAKI FIRST NATION

ODANAK

David Bernard
Gabriel Bordeleau Landry
Jacques T. Watso,
Dany Gill
Martin Gill,
Isaak Lachapelle-Gill
Charlotte Gauthier-Nolett
Eric Gauthier-Nolett

Annette Nolett
Mathieu O'Bomsawin

WOLINAK

Gabriel Bordeleau Landry

PASSAMAQUODDY - PENOBSCOT

Carol Dana
Jeremy Frey

ANISHINABE FIRST NATION

KITCISAKIK

Children from the Kitcisakik School
Jayce Hunter
Agnès Papatie
Maryam Papatie
Sandy-Rose Pénosway
Rose-Aline Poucachice
Anick Wylde
Denis Wylde

PIKOGAN

Benoit Croteau
Elie Croteau-Basile
Carlos Kistabish
Maddie Kistabish
Makhena Rankin-Guérin

Manitoulin Island, M'Chigeeng First Nation

Anong Beam

WIIKWEMKOONG

Sharon Debassige
Maria Ense-Cheechoo
Edna Manitowabi
Geesohns Manitowabi
Gordie Odjiq
Amanda Roy
Andrew Stitch Manitowabi

ATIKAMEKW FIRST NATION

Opitciwan

Constant Awashish
Eruoma Awashish
Mia-Jane Awashish
Siméon Awashish

Siméon Chachai
Annie Chachai
Bayden Chachai
Eva Chachai
Kwessa Chachai

EYOU ISTCHEE CREE FIRST NATION

WHAPMAGOOSTUI

Rain Iserhoff
Danielle O'Bomsawin-Mukash
Matthew Mukash
Saige Mukash

INNU FIRST NATION

MANI-UTENAM

Freddy Cluney
Kim Fontaine
Mathieu McKenzie
Scott-Pien Picard
Florent Vollant

PESSAMIT

Joséphine Bacon
Stanley Vollant

UNAMEN-SHIPU

Charles-API Bellefleur

MASHTEUIATSH

Alexandre Bacon
Laurie Rousseau Nepton

MATIMEKUSH – LAC JOHN

James Hendrix Ashini-Simon
Langis Fortin
Marie-Mai Fortin-Vollant
Anthony Gabriel
Dan Gabriel
Daniel Gabriel père
Dan Georges Gabriel
Dan Alex Gabriel
Grégoire Gabriel
Marie-Marthe Gabriel
Youane Gabriel
Agnes Mackenzie
Uatshekat M Mckenzie
Eloïse Tremblay

Gary Tremblay
Louise Uniam
Maika Volland

INUIT

INUKJUAK

Narsuq Atagotaaluk
Liza Kasuolluak
Anesie Nowkawalk
Sammy Mukpuk
Elisapie Nutura
Anna Samisack
Maina Tukai
Eliasie Weetalukuk

KUUJJUAQ

Malaya Chapman
Olivia Ikey Duncan
George Kauki
Arsaniq Deer Keelan

KANIEN'KEHÀ :KA (MOHAWK) FIRST NATION

MONTREAL

Charlotte Frey
Clara Frey

KANESATAKE

Salena Beauvais
Tara Bonspille
Travis Gabriel
Logan Gabriel
Teiwanniserate Tomlinson
Weriasanoron

KAHNAWAKE

Kevin Deer
Barbara Diabo
Marshall Diabo
Tracy Konwaherawi Cross Diabo
Lauren Jiles
Owen Mayo
Steve Mc Comber
Thomasina Phillips
MC Snow

MI'KMAQ FIRST NATION

LISTUGUJ AND GESGAPEGIAG

Don Barnaby
Quentin Condo
Donna Isaac-Brisk
Everleigh Jacques
Shawna Jerome
Mia Lagace
Karen Martin
Madelaine Metallic
Liam Vicaire
Joe Wilmot
Chris Wysote

NASKAPI NATION

KAWAWACHIKAMACH

Caroline Einish
Noah Einish
Ruth Einish
Nottie Sandy
Noah Swappie
Daunte Uniam
Miklo Uniam
Nathan Uniam
River Uniam

HURON-WENDAT FIRST NATION

WENDAKE

Brad Gros-Louis
Charles-Antoine Lesage
Jennifer O'Bomsawin
Samuel Savard Shukapesh
Guy Sioui-Durand

WOLASTOQIYIK WAHSIPEKUK FIRST NATION

CACOUNA

Ivanie Aubin-Malo
Mélanie Brière
Ginette Kakakos-Aubin.

WOLASTOQIYIK NEGOTKUK TOBIQUE FIRST NATION

TOBIQUE

Jeremy Dutcher
Lisa Pearly Dutcher
Ron Tremblay

RESILIENCE MONTRÉAL

Alexandra Ambrose
Nakuset
Bianca Pinette